

STARS AND STRIPES®

Hear the one about the former Marine entertaining troops?

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Navy welders tackle mission in Kuwait desert

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WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2005



Courtesy of The Washington Post

Marine 1st Lt. Dustin Ferrell, at his home at Camp Lejeune, N.C., was awarded the Purple Heart after a Humvee crash in Iraq left him badly injured. The Marine Corps later said the award had been given in error.

Shamed by an honor

Marines regret Purple Hearts given, then revoked

BY CHRISTIAN DAVENPORT
The Washington Post

The story of Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Arellano's wound is not exactly heroic. He was sitting in a tent in southern Iraq when the 9 mm handgun he was repairing went off, sending a bullet through his left leg.

That's why his heart sank in spring 2003, when he heard that he would receive the Purple Heart as he recovered at the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Md.

"I told them I didn't think I deserved it," said Arellano, 38, of Oceanside, Calif. The thought of wearing a medal he didn't earn "was eating me alive."

Then a letter arrived two months ago making things worse.

SEE PURPLE ON PAGE 5

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States

Robert Blake trial: A key prosecution witness in the Los Angeles murder trial of actor Robert Blake backed off of a claim that Blake tried to hire him to kill his wife and admitted he was a heavy user of cocaine and had experienced paranoid delusions.

Retired stuntman Gary McLarty, 64, told jurors Monday he met with Blake a few months before Bonny Lee Blake was killed, but did not even know the woman's name afterward and had only inferred that Blake wanted her dead.

"A lot of people want to strangle their wives at times," McLarty said, "and it was possible he was just venting his anger."

Under prosecution questioning Monday, McLarty said Blake complained to him about Blake, showed him where she lived at his home and pointed out a place where "someone could go up the stairs at night and pop her."

Case against Jackson: A death in the family of pop star Michael Jackson's lead defense attorney has delayed jury selection in the molestation case by a week.

In Santa Maria, Calif., Superior Court Judge Rodney S. Melville rescheduled questioning Monday of prospective jurors to Feb. 14. Another defense attorney, Brian Oxman, said a sister of attorney Thomas Mesereau Jr. had died, but that he could not get into details because of the gag order on attorneys in the case.

In another development, the judge agreed to a request by attorneys for news organizations covering the case to allow reporters to view questionnaires answered last week by prospective jurors.

Church case: A preacher has been convicted of stealing nearly \$9 million from hundreds of small, black churches across the country by promising them big returns on small investments.

Abraham Kennard was found guilty Monday by a federal jury in Rome, Ga., on 116 counts, including fraud and evasion.

Prosecutors said Kennard claimed his company was developing Christian resorts around the country. He told preachers that for a fee of a few thousand dollars, their churches could be "members" of his company.

New commerce secretary: Carlos Gutierrez, the former chief executive of cereal giant Kellogg, was sworn in Monday in Washington as the nation's 35th commerce secretary.

On his first day on the job, Gutierrez spoke to employees at Commerce Department headquarters, pledging to build on the record of President Bush's first commerce chief, Donald Evans, who resigned to return to Texas.

"Through our efforts to open markets, we can work together with other departments and Congress to strengthen America's economy," Gutierrez said in brief remarks.

Conjoined twins operations: Ahmed Ibrahim, one of the formerly conjoined Egyptian twins, was doing well following a four-hour surgery to reconstruct his skull, surgeons said.

The surgery, performed Monday at Medical City Children's Hospital in Dallas, was the latest in a series of steps to ensure long-term survival for the 3-year-old twins, Ahmed and Mohamed Ibrahim. Mohamed's surgery to reconstruct his skull is set for March 5.

The boys, born joined at the tops of their heads, were separated in October 2003 at Children's Medical Center in Dallas.

Couple accused of torture: A couple accused of subjecting five of their adopted children to torture that included beating them with whips and pliers their toes to get with pliers agreed Monday to be returned to



Afghan plane crash: An International Security Assistance Force Dutch Apache helicopter hovers Monday over the debris of the crashed Afghan Kam Air Boeing 737 on a snowy mountain in Chappert, 19 miles southeast of Kabul, Afghanistan. Referring to the crash, the hopes of desperate relatives that the first bodies could be retrieved from the wreckage, five days after the aircraft hit a mountain with 104 people on board — including six Americans. NATO soldiers on Monday found human remains but no survivors at the crash site.

Florida to face charges.

John and Linda Dollar were captured Friday in Utah after authorities tracked them through their cell phones. They face charges of aggravated child abuse.

The couple went on the run after all seven of their adopted children were removed from their home last month in the Tampa area.

Kevorkian in jail: Assisted-suicide advocate Jack Kevorkian is back in prison after undergoing surgery for a double hernia, his attorney said Monday.

Kevorkian returned to the Thumb Correctional Facility in Lapeer, Mich., on Sunday. Morganroth said Kevorkian will receive some follow-up treatment, but he didn't know if it would be at the prison or elsewhere.

Kevorkian, 76, is serving a 10- to 25-year sentence for second-degree murder after being convicted of giving a fatal injection to a Lou Gehrig's disease patient in 1998.

An outspoken advocate of doctor-assisted suicide for the terminally ill, Kevorkian has said he assisted in at least 130 deaths.

Business

WorldCom fraud allegations: The former chief financial officer of WorldCom Inc. described ex-CEO Bernard Ebbers as directly involved in the \$11 billion accounting fraud that sank the telecommunications giant.

Scott Sullivan, the star government witness in Ebbers' federal fraud trial, also described his boss as so fanatical about cost control he once complained employees were stealing coffee from the office.

Sullivan testified Monday that he had personally cooked the books at WorldCom to bring expenses, revenues and earnings per share in line with Wall Street estimates.

Sullivan is the linchpin of the federal case against Ebbers, who is accused in a federal indictment of fraud, conspiracy and false regulatory filings — charges that carry up to 85 years in prison upon conviction.

Sullivan pleaded guilty last year and agreed to testify against Ebbers, hoping his cooperation might win him a lighter prison sentence.

World

Milosevic tribunal: Two lawyers appointed to assist former Yugoslav President Milosevic in his war crimes trial at the Hague cannot withdraw from the case, tribunal President Theodor Meron has ruled.

British lawyers Steven Kay and Gillian Higgins have asked to back out of the landmark case. Milosevic, who faces 66 counts of war crimes during a decade of Balkan wars, refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the tribunal and calls it anti-Serbian and a tool of his opponents in the Western governments.

Sri Lankan rebels: Sri Lanka's government denied any involvement Tuesday in the killings of a top Tamil Tiger guerrilla leader and five others, which rebels blamed on paramilitary soldiers.

Tamil Tiger leader E. Kasaulayan was killed Monday as he traveled to the eastern town of Batticaloa, about 135 miles east of Colombo, military spokesman Brig. Daya Ratnayake said.

In a statement, the government condemned the killings, saying the attack was aimed at disrupting the "positive post-tsunami atmosphere of increasing cooperation between the government of Sri Lanka and Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam on humanitarian issues."

Dutch terror cases: Dutch prosecutors on Tuesday accused 16 alleged Kurdish rebels of membership in a group which plotted terrorist attacks, kidnappings and militant activity against the Turkish state, in the first major Dutch case of its kind.

Six defendants appeared in court in the Netherlands for a pretrial hearing and faced additional charges of passport forgery and money laundering with the aim of "destroying the political and economic structure of a country (Turkey)," prosecutor John Lucas said.

The case began with the arrest of 38 suspected rebels at an alleged training camp in November.

All suspects are accused of knowingly supporting the violent aims of the PKK, a Kurdish rebel group seeking autonomy in southern Turkey.

Stories and photo from wire services

Sullivan

Bomber targets Iraqi recruiters

BY JASON KEYSER
The Associated Press

BAGHDAD — A suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd of Iraqis outside an army recruitment center Tuesday, killing 21 other people and injuring 27 more, the U.S. military said. It was the deadliest attack in the Iraqi capital since last week's election.

There were conflicting reports about the attack, which occurred at an Iraqi National Guard headquarters at the Muthana airfield.

Iraqi officials blamed the explosion on mortar fire and officials at Baghdad's al-Yarmouk Hospital said they had received 16 bodies from the scene, all of them army recruits.

But witnesses reported only one explosion, and the U.S. military said the blast was caused by a suicide bomber.

The al-Qaida in Iraq terror group, led by Jordanian militant Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, claimed responsibility for the attack in an Internet statement.

"This is the beginning of the escalation we promised you," said the statement posted on an Islamic Website. It said the claim's authenticity couldn't be verified.

Elsewhere, three police officers were killed in clashes in Baghdad's western Ghazaliya neighborhood, scene of numerous clashes and assassinations over the past six months.

Also Tuesday, assailants sprayed a politician's car with gunfire, killing two of the man's sons, an Interior Ministry official said. The politician, Mithal al-Alusi, who heads the National party, escaped unhurt.

He gained notoriety last year after he was expelled from the Iraqi National Congress party for

Baghdad blast leaves 21 dead, 27 injured



Hospital workers bring a body into the al-Yarmouk hospital Tuesday after a blast shook an Iraqi army recruiting center in Baghdad. A suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd of Iraqis outside an army recruitment center leaving 21 others dead and 27 more, U.S. officials said. It was the deadliest attack in the Iraqi capital since last week's election.

AP

attending a terrorism conference in Israel. Al-Alusi is one of the candidates who ran in Iraq's landmark Jan. 30 elections.

On Monday, gunmen killed an Iraqi chef employed by U.S. forces at Baghdad International Airport, hospital officials said Tuesday.

In Mosul, two Kurdish politicians were also gunned down Monday, said an official from the Kurdistan Democratic Party.

The violence is picking up again in the Iraqi capital following the elections, when a massive security crackdown prevented insurgents from launching major attacks. Iraqis chose a 275-member National Assembly and provincial councils, as well as a regional parliament in the Kurdish-controlled north.

Final results of the election are expected this week. The latest

partial returns released Tuesday showed a Kurdish ticket had moved into second place behind a coalition of Shiite religious parties, relegating a faction led by U.S.-backed interim Prime Minister Ayad Allawi to third place.

Also Tuesday, a militant group claimed in an Internet statement that it has executed a female Italian journalist abducted in Baghdad for spying on "body fighters."

There was no way to verify the authenticity of the statement, which offered no proof that Giuliana Sgrena, a 56-year-old reporter, had been held by the group. She was kidnapped by gunmen on Friday in Baghdad.

Tuesday's attacks were the latest sign that insurgents are stepping up their assault on Iraq's security forces, which the United States hopes can assume a greater role once a newly elected government takes office.

A day earlier, a suicide bomber also walked into a crowd of Iraqi policemen near a hospital in the northern city of Mosul, killing 12 officers.

The attacks by bombers on foot point to a shift in rebel tactics, as concrete blast walls and road-blocks have made it harder for guerrillas to strike at Iraqi security forces with car bombs.

The bombings, shootings and kidnappings have shattered a brief downturn in violence after the elections, the first nationwide balloting since the fall of Saddam in April 2003.

Election officials acknowledged thousands of people in the Sunni-dominated Mosul area who wanted to vote during the balloting were unable to because of security. Fewer than a third of the planned 330 polling centers in Mosul and the surrounding province managed to open on election day, officials said.

U.S. deaths in Iraq

The Associated Press

As of Monday, at least 1,450 members of the U.S. military have died since the beginning of the Iraq war in March 2003, according to an Associated Press count. At least 1,107 died as a result of hostile action, the Defense Department said. The figures include four military civilians.

The AP count is five higher than the Defense Department's tally, last updated at 10 a.m. EST Monday.

The British military has reported 86 deaths; Italy, 20; Poland, 16; Ukraine, 16; Spain, 11; Bulgaria, three; Slovakia, three; Estonia, Thailand and the Netherlands, two each; and Denmark, El Salvador, Hungary, Latvia and Kazakhstan one death each.

Since May 1, 2003, when President Bush declared that major combat operations in Iraq had ended, 1,312 U.S. military members have died, according to AP's count. That includes at least 998 deaths resulting from hostile action, according to the military's numbers.

The latest deaths reported by the military:

■ A Marine was killed Sunday in Iraq's Babil province.

The latest identifications reported by the military:

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Travis M. Wichlacz, 22, West Bend, Wis., died Saturday in Iraq's Babil province, assigned to Marine Forces Reserve's 2nd Battalion, 24th Marine Regiment, 4th Marine Division, Milwaukee, Wis.

■ Marine Lance Cpl. Richard C. Clifton, 19, Milford, Del., died Thursday in Iraq's Anbar province, assigned to 2nd Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Division, I Marine Expeditionary Force, Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif.

NATO on verge of expanding peacekeeping in Afghanistan

BY PAUL AMES
The Associated Press

NICE, France — NATO is close to announcing a major expansion of its peacekeeping mission in Afghanistan by sending troops into the western sector of the country along the border with Iran.

Defense ministers from the alliance were expected to agree on the plans at a meeting Wednesday and Thursday in this Riviera resort city.

The western deployment will be a significant step in plans for NATO to extend its operation across the whole of Afghanistan by early 2006, replacing integrating the U.S.-led combat force that invaded in the country in 2001 to topple the Taliban regime.

Expanding the NATO force could free up U.S. forces for

Iraq, although Washington will keep troops in Afghanistan to serve with the NATO mission and to continue hunting Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaida leaders believed hiding in mountainous Afghan-Pakistan border lands.

NATO military planners have struggled for months to find European nations willing to commit troops needed to expand the 8,500-strong International Security Assistance Force into the west.

Under the latest plans, Italy will join the United States in providing the core of the western mission, based in the city of Herat. U.S., Spanish and Lithuanian troops will deploy to three other western cities.

Diplomats at NATO headquarters expect the deployment of several hundred troops to the west to be completed ahead of parliamentary elections due to be held by May.

Prime Minister Tony Blair said Tuesday he hoped that international support for training Iraqi security forces would broaden at the summit.

Giving evidence to a committee of lawmakers, Blair said he expected members to strike an agreement at the meeting.

"I think you may find that at the NATO meeting at the end of February we get an agreement on help for training the Iraqi security forces," Blair said.

"I hope that we will see some of the countries that have not been involved in either the conflict in Iraq or its aftermath joining that training exercise," he said.

NATO has about 80 soldiers in Baghdad assisting in training Iraqi security forces. Germany, France, Belgium, Greece and Spain are not taking part in the mission.

Big Red One turns over its mission to 42nd

Stars and Stripes

The 1st Infantry Division officially handed over its aircraft support mission to the 42nd Aviation Division on Feb. 2 at Forward Operating Base Speicher, Iraq, as the Big Red One took another step in wrapping up its time in the country.

The 1st ID's 4th Aviation Brigade commander, Col. Walter Golden, transferred authority of the mission to Lt. Col. Mark Burke, commander of the 42nd Aviation Brigade, in a short ceremony on the base in north central Iraq.

"You are off to a great start establishing the command reputation for aviation mission support," Golden said in a 1st ID news release.

Mag. Gen. John Batiste, 1st ID's Task Force Danger commander, said during the ceremony that he

was confident the 42nd's units would carry forward work started by the 1st ID. The units include the 1st Battalion, 150th Aviation Regiment, 1st Battalion, 17th Cavalry Regiment, 642nd Aviation Support Battalion, and Headquarters and Headquarters Companies.

"You have already made a name for yourself since you arrived and you will continue to provide world-class aerial support," he said in the release.

Burke complimented the 4th Aviation Brigade on its work during the past year and vowed the 42nd would continue to perform just as well.

"We have been preparing for this mission since last May, and now we are fully prepared thanks to the efforts of the 4th Aviation Brigade," he said during the ceremony. "You can be sure that all your efforts will not be in vain."

\$1B U.S. Embassy in Iraq may be scaled back

Baghdad mission could be the largest American complex in the world

BY PAULINE JELINEK
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Plans for the largest U.S. Embassy in the world — a \$1 billion compound envisioned for Iraq's capital — may be shrinking even before it has been built.

About \$660 million for construction of a fortified complex is expected to be included in President Bush's request to Congress for some \$80 billion the administration says it needs in Iraq and Afghanistan through September, according to congressional aides from both parties.

They spoke on condition of anonymity because the spending request has yet to be released. It could go to Capitol Hill this week.

The \$1 billion figure had arisen in discussions involving the State Department and congressional officials over the past year, but the White House did not submit a request for funds, the aides said.

Last year, when the department was preparing to set up temporary facilities for post-occupation diplomacy, officials said the Baghdad mission would include 700 Iraqi employees and 1,000 Americans. The U.S. contingent

would cover employees of the CIA, the Defense Department, the Commerce Department and about a dozen federal agencies besides the State Department.

No numbers on the size of the permanent mission have been announced.

By comparison, one of the largest U.S. missions is in Moscow, where an embassy spokesman said there are 350 Americans. Assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Tokyo are 250 Americans from 20 government agencies, a spokesman there said.

A diplomatic compound being

built in Beijing is estimated to cost \$275 million. Those constructed in 2003 in Kenya and Tanzania — where terrorists bombed the embassies in 1998 — cost \$68 million and \$40 million, respectively, officials said at the time.

It was unclear whether the higher expenses in Baghdad would stem from the need for housing inside the compound, the high number of employees or some other cause.

The site is expected to be in the heavily fortified Green Zone, where U.S. government employees live and work. That would put

it near where the United States had its embassy before diplomatic relations were broken with Iraq in 1990 over its invasion of Kuwait.

The idea of building a large permanent facility in Iraq has detractors, who say this may not be the time, and Baghdad not the place, for such a project.

"A huge U.S. embassy does not fit the political mood of Iraq and I think it sends the wrong message," said Frederick Barton, a former official of the U.N. refugee agency and U.S. Agency for International Development who now is with the Center for Strategic and International Studies.



Celebrating Mardi Gras in Baghdad

Above: A Humvee from Louisiana's 256th Brigade is decorated as a float for a Mardi Gras parade Sunday at Camp Liberty in Baghdad. The National Guard soldiers celebrated Mardi Gras two days early so that the maximum number of soldiers could participate. Right: First Lt. Forrest Tuckett of Rayville, La., holds up a coin and a cup full of candy he collected during Camp Liberty's Mardi Gras parade. The parade was followed by a meal of chicken and sausage gumbo, red beans and rice, and King cake. They also had cold beer, donated by Anheuser Busch Companies for Super Bowl parties, but commanders decided to combine the celebrations.

AP photos



Shootings of civilians tests GIs, U.S. image

BY DIONNE SEARCY
Newsday

MUSLIM, Iraq — The taxi rolled slowly down a wide street in the northwest industrial neighborhood, past the row of shuttered auto parts shops, a muddy vacant lot and a desert soccer field, transporting 5-year-old Hakam and his father to the Al-Sina'i district in the south.

Suddenly about 20 uniformed paratroopers of the 82nd Airborne Division appeared across the median. Breathless and jittery, the men were walking back to camp after a harrowing morning in which one of their soldiers was shot by a sniper. Half the troops raised their hands and signaled the taxi to halt.

The car slowed, but then it sped up. In line with their rules of engagement, the troops opened fire, blowing out three of the four windows, two tires, and ripping through the windshield and hood of the Volkswagen sedan.

"Cease-fire!" one of the soldiers yelled, and all was quiet.

From inside the peckmarked car, the driver, a tall balding man with a bullet hole in his chest, unlatched his door and stumbled to the curb. The father got out, too, blood covering his face and soaking his black wool sweater. The back door opened and round-faced Hakam with an injured hand stepped from the car, looked at the troops and started to sob.

The incident on the sunny afternoon of Jan. 25 was one of a half-dozen such over several weeks in the Mosul area, according to soldiers.

Finding a way to deal with the shootings is a matter of urgency, but for the soldiers, who fear the very real danger of suicide car bombers at practically every street corner, there is no obvious solution.

The problem has expanded since the arrival here of the 82nd Airborne because of the way this unit is deployed. The paratroopers dismount from their vehicles and walk their beat, unlike their predecessors who patrolled the northwest sector in lumbering, easy-to-spot Stryker armored vehicles.

Addressing the issue is all the more difficult because senior military officials in Washington and Baghdad said they do not collect overall statistics on these types of incidents. They let battle captions on the ground decide how best to handle their operations.

The airborne soldiers who shot up the taxi on "Dixie" followed the rules, their commander said, even though the outcome was regrettable.

Whether the military is able to figure out the lessons of the incident with the taxi, the scene will be indelibly engraved in the minds of those who witnessed it. By the time soldiers took the three to the hospital, their conditions were stable.

U.S. flies wounded Ukrainian soldiers home

BERLIN — The U.S. Air Force flew three Ukrainian soldiers home to Kiev on Tuesday after they were treated at a U.S. military hospital in Germany for wounds suffered in Iraq, a spokeswoman said. The three soldiers departed from Ramstein Air Base aboard a C-130 Hercules after being treated at Landstuhl Regional Medical Center, Ramstein spokeswoman Erin Zagursky said.

The men were wounded Jan. 9 in an explosion at an ammunition dump in Iraq that killed eight of their comrades.

They were among five Ukrainian soldiers wounded in the incident who were treated at Landstuhl for shrapnel wounds, said hospital spokeswoman Marie Shaw.

Two others remain at the hospital and are in stable condition.

From the Associated Press

Command Sgt. Maj. John Sparks of the Coalition Forces Land Component Command visits with Marine Staff Sgt. Robert Arellano, a supply sergeant with 5th Battalion 11th Marines on March 29 at the Kuwait Armed Forces Hospital. Arellano, a San Diego native, was wounded during Operation Iraqi Freedom and was receiving medical attention from the 865th Combat Support Hospital.

Courtesy of the U.S. Army



Purple: Mistakes anger Marines

PURPLE, FROM PAGE 1

The Purple Heart pinned on him nearly two years earlier had been "an administrative error" because his wound was not "caused directly or indirectly by enemy action." Ten other Marines who sustained noncombat injuries got the same news, from the office of the commandant of the Marine Corps.

For a branch of the service that considers itself the most rigorous in the awarding of medals, such revocations are exceptionally rare, according to military historians and veterans. And for the 11 Marines, this was a final indignity added to the injuries they sustained in a war zone.

Even worse, they said, in a culture in which careers are chronicled by decorations on uniforms, was the shame they felt at having worn the medals for almost two years.

"It was a slap in the face. The way it was handled was atrocious," said 1st Lt. Dustin Ferrell, who was badly injured when his Humvee crashed into an Army truck. Gen. William Nylund, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, pinned the medal on his green hospital gown at the Bethesda medical center.

The Purple Heart, based on an award created by George Washington, is bestowed much more frequently than medals such as the Silver and Bronze stars, which are for exceptional acts of heroism, and are based on nominations. Purple Hearts are awarded to those who meet guidelines for having sustained injuries related to combat with enemy forces.

Still, Capt. Travis Eichelberger, 22, was featured on the local news and it seemed like everyone in his home town of Atchison, Kan., knew he had been awarded the medal. He even received the state-issued Purple Heart license plate when he bought his new GMC truck in 2003.

"When you wear it, people look at you and give you respect," said Eichelberger, still recovering from a broken pelvis and intestinal damage from being run over by an Abrams tank. "But now it's been taken away from us. What are we supposed to tell people? If they don't know the story, it makes us look as if we were lying."

The mistake grew out of confusion over the circumstances of the injuries, specifically the difference between wounds sustained in a combat zone and those caused by hostile action, said Charles Mugoio, chief of the Marine Corps Awards Branch. The injured Marines were among the first wave of casualties to return from Iraq, he said, and there was a rush to honor them. Ferrell was injured in the first days of the war when his Humvee, racing through the desert at night to secure a bridge in Na-

siriyah, crashed into an Army truck. The driver was killed and both others were severely injured.

It was unclear from the casualty reports whether Ferrell deserved the award, Mugoio said. An e-mail from an administrative officer said that he probably did meet the criteria, but it also was inconclusive.

Once the Marines Corps realized the error, it had no choice but to remove the awards from the Marines' records, officials said. They did not require that the medals be returned.

"The most important point is that the revocation was the right thing to do in order to maintain the sanctity and the specialness of the award," said Lt. Col. T.V. Jonsson, a Marine Corps spokesman.

Purple Hearts have triggered controversy before, most recently in the 2004 presidential campaign. Some veterans challenged the three Purple Hearts, as well as the Silver Star, that Democratic nominee Sen. John F. Kerry received for his service as a Navy swift boat commander in the Vietnam War.

Arellano said he felt so guilty about the medal that he refused to wear it.

Knowing the fierce emotions surrounding military decorations, Arellano felt like a fraud wearing his medal. So when it was finally taken off his official record, "it relieved me of my guilt," he said.

"Nobody's perfect, and a lot of people make mistakes," he said.

"But when it's such high-ranking officers, they're quick to know better."

Ferrell felt the same way. With no memory of how he was injured, Ferrell said, he was told by medical staff that the Humvee he had been riding in was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade. About three months later, as the rest of his unit returned to Camp Lejeune, N.C., he learned what had really happened. There had been no RPG, his fellow Marines told him. He was in a traffic accident.

After hearing that his Humvee crashed into an Army truck, Ferrell felt that he still deserved to wear the medal, even if the circumstances under which it was awarded had changed. He was in a combat zone, after all, with the war raging all around.

When it was revoked, he felt as if he had "disgraced" himself by wearing it in front of his fellow Marines, and he chastised higher-ups for the mistake.

"I would not dishonor that medal or myself by wearing the thing again, though someone allowed me to wear it and shame myself at TWO Marine Corps Birthday Balls," he wrote in an angry e-mail to an administrative officer last month.

Bobbie Pratt of The Washington Post contributed to this report.

The Purple Heart

The Purple Heart was established by Gen. George Washington at Newburgh, New York, on August 1782, during the Revolutionary War. It was re-established by the President of the United States per War Department General Orders 3, 1932, and is currently awarded pursuant to Executive Order 11016, 25 April 1962, Executive Order 12464, 23 February 1984 and Public Law 98-525, 19 October 1984.

a. The Purple Heart is awarded in the name of the President of the United States to any member of an Armed Force or any civilian national* of the United States who, while serving under competent authority in any capacity with one of the U.S. Armed Services after 5 April 1917, has been wounded or killed, or who has died or may hereafter die after being wounded.

(1) In any action against an enemy of the United States.

(2) In any action with an opposing armed force of a foreign country in which the Armed Forces of the United States are or have been engaged.

(3) While serving with friendly foreign forces engaged in an armed conflict against an opposing armed force in which the United States is not a belligerent party.

(4) As a result of an act of any such enemy of opposing armed forces.

(5) As a result of an act of any hostile foreign force.

(6) After 28 March 1973, as a result of an international terrorist attack against the United States or a foreign nation friendly to the United States, recognized as such an attack by the Secretary of Army, or jointly by the Secretaries of the separate armed services concerned if persons from more than one service are wounded in the attack.

(7) After 28 March 1973, as a result of military operations while serving outside the territory of the United States as part of a peacekeeping force.

b. While clearly an individual decoration, the Purple Heart differs from all other decorations in that an individual is not "recommended" for the decoration, rather he or she is entitled to it upon meeting specific criteria.

c. Amended in 1997 to limit to members of the armed services only

Source: Paragraph 2-8, Army Regulation 600-9-22 (Military Awards)

DOO expands production of ammunition

BY STEPHEN J. HEDGES

Chicago Tribune

WASHINGTON — The pace of training and combat required of U.S. troops in Iraq is prompting the Army to quadruple its production of small-arms ammunition compared with prewar levels, a move intended to stave off an ammunition shortage like the one the Pentagon faced last summer.

The Army wound months into awarding manufacturing contracts for ammunition used in its M-16 and M-4 rifles and 50-caliber guns. Since shortly after the Vietnam War, that ammunition has been made at only one location in the United States: the sprawling Lake City Army Ammunition Plant in Independence, Mo.

But the intensified training of troops, particularly National Guard and Reserve units that find themselves in hostile situations throughout Iraq, has meant units are quickly running through the Pentagon's ammunition stockpiles. Last summer, the Defense Department turned to ammunition makers in South Korea, Canada and Israel to supplement the weapons stocks.

The expanded contracts are another indication of just how intense the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have become, especially compared with the original expectations of military leaders and planners.

"We have had a lot of shortages in small- and medium-caliber ammunition," said Col. Mark Rider, project manager for maneuver ammunition systems at Picatinny Arsenal in New Jersey. Riders is responsible for the Army's small-arms ammunition.

Production of 5.56 mm and 7.62 mm rounds will jump from 400 million rounds in 1999 to 1.8 billion this year. Most of those will be made at Lake City Techsystems at the Lake City arsenal.

The cost of that ammunition, and expanded production, has more than doubled from \$124.5 million in 1999 to \$285 million this year, including \$100 million in supplemental funds provided by Congress directly for operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. The Pentagon's \$185 million in supplemental funds for ammunition is expected this year.

U.S. judge rejects stop-loss lawsuit

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — A federal judge on Monday dismissed a lawsuit challenging the Army's right to force soldiers to serve past the dates of their enlistment, the so-called stop-loss policy that can keep men and women in uniform during war or national emergencies.

Spe. David Qualls had sought a preliminary injunction to prevent the Army from forcing him to remain on active duty, claiming his enlistment contract was misleading. He signed up for a one-year stint in the Arkansas National Guard in July 2003 but was later told he would remain on active duty in Iraq until 2005.

U.S. District Judge Royce C. Lamberth for the District of Columbia said the enlistment contract does not notify those who sign up that the government could extend their terms of service. While acknowledging minimal harm to the Army if he ordered Qualls released, Lamberth said similar claims could lead to substantial disruption and diversion of military resources.

The enlistments of an estimated 7,000 active-duty soldiers have been extended under the policy, which the Army says is needed to provide experienced soldiers for battle. As many as 40,000 reserve soldiers could be ordered to stay longer.

Germany-based units' return 'long overdue'

BY STEVE LIEWER
Stars and Stripes

SCHWEINFURT, Germany — The ground-pounders are coming home.

Three jets of infantry and armor soldiers from the 1st Infantry Division's 2nd Brigade combat team arrived in Schweinfurt on Monday after nearly a year of hot, dirty, bloody work battling Iraqi insurgents in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit.

Hundreds of family members trickled into the gym at Schweinfurt's Conn Barracks to welcome home their troops at two ceremonies Monday afternoon and evening. Two hundred fifty-eight of the soldiers came from the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment, and 40 represented the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment.

It was a happy end to a stressful year.

"It's long overdue," said Master Sgt. Jason Travis as he cuddled his 16-month-old daughter, Anastasia. "It's great to be home."

The 1-18 Infantry patrolled a relatively calm sector of the Sunni Triangle, a restive region north and west of Baghdad that includes many pockets of rebellion.

That meant soldiers spent more time on constructive efforts such as boosting local governments in Tikrit and nearby villages such as Owja and Wymot while building new schools and health clinics. The area saw voter turnouts of 80 percent to 90 percent during the Jan. 31 elections, said 1st Sgt. John Hatley, 6e, of Groesbeck, Texas, the senior noncommissioned officer to return Monday.

But it still meant continuing almost daily attacks by insurgents

using roadside bombs and rocket-propelled grenades. Six 1-18 Infantry soldiers died in Iraq, four of them last March in the unit's first three weeks patrolling Tikrit. One of the dead was a popular company commander, Capt. John F. "Hans" Kurth, who died with his driver, Spc. Jason Ford, in a bomb attack.

"It feels so good not to have to worry anymore," said Olga Kurviel as she waited for her husband, Sgt. Richard Kurviel of the 1-18 Infantry, with her two children, Alexandra, 8, and Ricky, 4. "Thank God they're coming home safe."

Sgt. 1st Class Rachelle Gattenby of the Würzburg-based 67th Combat Support Hospital waited with her 5-year-old daughter, Gillian, for her husband, Sgt. 1st Class Brian Gattenby, a 1-77 Armor soldier who was attached to the 1-18 Infantry.

She, too, just returned from a year in Iraq, during which Gillian stayed with her grandparents in the United States. Being deployed near her husband made little difference. Aside from their two weeks of rest-and-recuperation leave, they saw each other only three times.

"He was eight miles from us, but it might as well have been 800 miles," Rachelle Gattenby said. "It was hard. We supported those guys from the 1-18 (Infantry). But we prayed every day they didn't show up in the hospital."

In spite of the hardships, several soldiers said they had no regrets about their mission in Iraq. "I was proud to be part of this," said Richard Kurviel, 26, of San Antonio. "It's been an experience I won't forget."

Other groups of returnees include 77 soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regi-

ment, 88 from the 701st Main Support Battalion, 146 from the 1st Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, 90 from the 101st Military Intelligence Battalion and 52 from the Division Support Command.

The flights this time are quite different from those last year, when the first rotation of troops returned from Iraq. In 2004, most battalion-size units returned home in two or three large groups after conveying from Iraq to the port in Kuwait.

This year, though, most Big Red One soldiers are flying home on Air Force C-17s directly from the airfield at Tikrit or from Balad as seats are available. That eliminates a long, dangerous convoy ride to Kuwait, and a dull wait of two to three weeks in one of that country's desert camps.

—Steve Liewer



PHOTOS BY KRISTEN CHANDLER TOTT/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Above: Soldiers and family members bow their heads in prayer shortly before being dismissed during a welcome home ceremony Monday at Finney Fitness Center on Conn Barracks in Schweinfurt, Germany.

Far left: Christina Shockley, welcome her husband, Spc. Stephen Shockley, with a kiss as the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry soldier holds his 2-year-old daughter, Hannah.

Left: Sgt. 1st Class Brian Gattenby greets his apprehensive 5-year-old daughter, Gillian, during the welcome home ceremony.



1st ID troops welcomed home at several bases

WÜRZBURG, Germany — With the historic Iraq elections complete, the 1st Infantry Division troops who stayed to make them safer are now coming home by the plane load.

Monday's arrival of 300 troops from the 1st Battalion, 18th Infantry Regiment and the 1st Battalion, 77th Armor Regiment at their home base in Schweinfurt, was the largest of a flood of homecomings that began late last week.

At least 10 other C-17s loaded with returning Big Red One troops from 15 units have arrived since Saturday, said Spc. Rebecca Sharpton, a 1st ID spokeswoman. Thirteen more are expected in the next few days.

Other groups of returnees include 77 soldiers from the 1st Battalion, 7th Field Artillery Regi-

ment, 88 from the 701st Main Support Battalion, 146 from the 1st Battalion, 1st Aviation Regiment, 90 from the 101st Military Intelligence Battalion and 52 from the Division Support Command.

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—Steve Liewer

After training Iraqi coast guard in Gulf, Underwood heads home

BY SCOTT SCHONAUER
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL STATION ROTA, Spain — On one of their first trips out to sea, it wasn't long before most of the Iraqi mariners couldn't stomach the Persian Gulf's rolling swells and became seasick.

It might have been an inauspicious start for the newest members of the Iraqi Coastal Defense Force, but the mariners have come a long way since that nauseating day.

While the Iraqis lack experience and resources, U.S. sailors say there is no shortage of desire and commitment.

"They were very, very enthusiastic," said Lt. Rick Evangelista, a combat systems officer aboard the frigate USS Underwood who served as liaison to the Iraqi coast guard.

"Some of the proficiency wasn't there and some of their skills weren't there, but they were definitely eager to be out there."

The Underwood is on its way home to Mayport, Fla., after a six-month deployment to the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea, and a brief stop in Rota. Some of its sailors worked closely with the Iraqi coast guard forces.

The 50-member coast guard has improved so much that Evangelista and some other American sailors believe the Iraqis could take over the job of protecting and



SCOTT SCHONAUER/Stars and Stripes

The USS Underwood sits Friday at Naval Station Rota, Spain. The frigate recently wrapped up a six-month deployment to the Mediterranean Sea and Middle East region and is on its way home to Mayport, Fla.

guarding the country's coastline and oil platforms in a year.

At the moment, a U.S.-led coalition takes on the bulk of that duty with the help of the Iraqi mariners.

The coast guard has not had the prob-

lems some Iraqi National Guard units have had with recruiting and corruption. The coast guard's training has gone so well that some top officers with the coalition have observed the units to see why they appear to have done so well, said Navy Chief War-

"If you really think about it, one year ago they really didn't have a Navy," said Willis, who spent a year helping train the coast guard. "It was gone. Within one year's time, they've gone from nothing to five operational patrol boats."

"From what they have to work with, these guys are doing great."

The reason for the success, Willis said, appears to be that most of the Iraqis enjoy what they do. They get a decent wage and the facilities are better than some of the national guard units.

"They like it there," Willis said. "I think that is a big part."

Iraq has five Chinese-made patrol boats with teams of 10 Iraqi mariners in each. Every morning, coalition officers go out with the patrol boats to help them communicate with other military ships and train them in seamanship.

Ensign Henry Russell, the frigate's boarding team and electrical officer, said the Iraqis were friendly and eager to eventually take over the task of protecting the country's critical oil platforms.

"From the beginning when we got there to when we left, there was a pretty big difference," Russell said. "They know exactly what they have to do."

And that might include remembering to bring the seasick medicine.

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Sgonella EOD unit's techs in high demand

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Sicily — In spite of their name, sailors of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8 prefer things not to go boom.

"People have a misconception about us. We try to keep things from exploding. That's when we're doing our job," said Lt. Greg Zach, the readiness and training officer of EODMU 8.

An assignment with the Sicily-based unit guarantees sailors at least one thing, they said: travel.

Detachments of usually six members of "thunderstealers" deploy throughout the European and Central command's area of responsibility, from frigid locations above the Arctic Circle, to the heat of the Horn of Africa and the sands of Iraq.

Of the unit's eight detachments, four currently are deployed.

The Navy is the only service to require its EOD technicians to be certified in diving, demolition, parachuting and insertions and extractions, though the Army and Marine Corps are adding that training to their ranks, Zach said.

The specialized training makes the sailors a hot commodity, especially as the na-

tion fights terrorism and trains militaries of friendly nations to do the same, said Cmdr. Daniel Donovan, commander of EODMU 8.

Detachments routinely are loaned to Special Operations Command Europe, which has its contingent of sailors now in Iraq working alongside Special Forces, Donovan said.

And a group of eight now is training above the Arctic Circle in Norway, honing skills from ice diving to mine countermeasures and working in extreme-weather conditions, Donovan said. More still are on the USS Emory S. Land in the Gulf of Guinea to train African nations' militaries. Others have taught demining skills to technicians in Chad and Lebanon.

"We've been in 40 countries in the last two years, in Europe, Africa and the Middle East," Donovan said.

Anyone can apply, but with an attrition rate of about 40 percent, only the cream of the crop stick around.

"It's really the top people, the people who aren't lazy, the people who are able to think out of the box, use common sense, think of different ways to do things," said Petty Officer 1st Class Justin Mayo, 26.

"We have to. We usually only get one chance," he said, referring to the explosive side of their business.

EOD-bound sailors go through 51 weeks of rigorous training that starts with three months of boot camp and includes physics, medicine, lessons of mixed gas, hyperbaric chamber operations and small-boat operations, among other areas of study.



SANDRA JONTZ/Stars and Stripes

Sailors from Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit 8 and HC-4 Squadron out of Naval Air Station Sigonella, Sicily, practice rappelling from the back of a Navy CH-53 Super Stallion. Navy EOD techs are the only ones in the U.S. military who are specialized in all areas of diving, demolition, parachuting, and insertions and extractions, officials said.

Then it's on to learning about ground ordnance, such as land mines, grenades and booby traps, and air ordnance, improvised explosive devices, underwater ordnance and nuclear weapons, according to a training manual.

And that's just the basics.

They're a group of overachievers, Mayo said.

"Every day that I come to work, something gets accomplished," said Mayo, who recently learned the Turkish language and now is working on Italian.

Once in the EOD field, sailors tend to

make the Navy their career, said Master Chief Petty Officer Stephen Boneau, the unit's leading chief petty officer and assistant operations officer.

Boneau, 44, joined the Navy thinking he'd probably get out after four years of service. Twenty-six years later, with 20 in the EOD, he's nowhere near ready to leave active duty, he said.

"We're Type A personalities, very motivated, both physically and mentally," Boneau said.

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Fish out of water: Sailors adjust to working in desert

Mission brings Navy welders from USS Emory S. Land to Kuwait base

BY BEN MURRAY
Stars and Stripes

On first hearing it, the concept may sound too ironic to be true: a team of sailors assigned to duty in the middle of the desert, spending their days working on Army vehicles.

Uh huh. And the Air Force's best pilots have been signed up for submarine duty.

But for 15 crew members from the Navy sub tender and maintenance vessel USS Emory S. Land, who are currently working at Camp Buehring in northern Kuwait, the idea is as real as the sand in their conspicuously blue coveralls.

Since late January, the team of metal workers and hull technicians has been working 24 hours a day in three shifts to weld armor plating onto its newly adopted fleet, the hopdeodge of vehicles used by the Army to support Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The program is a first for the

Land, and came about late last year when the Army put out a call for more welders to up-armor its convoy vehicles. The request was forwarded to the Navy.

Because the Land, based in La Maddalena, Sardinia, was relatively close by and its welders were scheduled to have some free time on a mainly humanitarian mission last month, the ship was a logical place to find the needed help, said the ship's repair officer, Cmdr. Brian McGinnis.

"The mission of [Fleet Maintenance Activity] is to fix things. The Army had vehicles that needed to be fixed. It's only natural that the closest asset where the work is [needed] go and perform the job," McGinnis said in an e-mail to Stars and Stripes.

With that green light, the 15 volunteers from the Land quickly became fish out of water in a soldier's world, where, "we stick out like a sore thumb," in their Navy



Courtesy of the U.S. Navy

Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael Croft, a damage controlman, welds an armor plate onto the turret of an Army vehicle at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, where 15 sailors are using their Navy skills to help protect troops on missions in Iraq.

uniforms, said Lt. j.g. Christopher O'Leary, who was deployed with the welders.

"It has prompted people to ask us questions like 'Who'd you piss off to get sent here?'" he said.

Reached by e-mail last week, O'Leary responded to a list of Stars and Stripes questions posed to the Land welders about the life of a desert-dwelling sailor.

For the most part, the transition to life off the ship has been pretty easy, O'Leary said, thanks in part to the busy schedule and a

take on their surroundings that makes the place seem a little more like home.

"We don't call it the desert, we call it the bottom of the ocean, which is currently all dried up," he said.

The work of cutting metal and bonding plates together is familiar to the crew members, he said, and after some tutelage from members of the 276th Maintenance Company, which is also working at the camp, the welders took to the job, "like we had been doing it all along," O'Leary said.

The hardest part has been learning Army lingo and the names of all the new vehicles they're armoring, he said.

"I thought the Navy had a lot of acronyms," he said.

As strange as the setting is for the sailors, getting sent to far-away locations to fix vehicles — from surface ships to submarines, and now Army Humvees — is the fleet maintenance crew's bread and butter, McGinnis said.

"For us, this is just another fly-away to go fix something. Only this time, it's not a vessel tied up to a pier, it is a vehicle parked in the middle of the desert," he said.

O'Leary said the sailors see the mission in a similar way, and consider it "an awesome opportunity," though an unexpected one. "Never in a million dreams did we think we would be on dry land fixing Army vehicles," he said.

But even with desert sand under their feet, working in Kuwait gives the sailors the same sense of accomplishment they feel while working on the Emory S. Land, O'Leary said.

"The mission is unique only because it is a different location than we are used to," he said. "We know that what we are doing will save soldiers. No different than the work we do on ships and submarines. Those repairs also save sailors."

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Merger of task force's staffs bolters capabilities

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Sicily — The joining of Combined Task Force 67's operational and headquarters staffs in Sicignella



Lally

has created a synergy and increased the unit's capabilities. Navy officials say. As part of the Navy's transformation, the CTF-67 headquarters was moved to Sigonella in October from Naples, Italy, joining the headquarters staff with the operational sailors who carry out the day-to-day missions.

But the change is much more than just a physical move, more than Rear Adm. C. Van Manney, director of Navy Europe Plans and Operations.

"We capitalize on current technology and look for ways to use new technology, employing better business practices and putting new operational concepts into play that support European command's focus to the South and East," Van Manney said in a statement. "CTF-67 is focusing on all those areas and the result is that their operations have increased their value and have made specific contributions to our theater priorities."

At the heart of CTF-67 are the

squadrons of P-3 Orions that deploy to Sigonella every six months, providing maritime surveillance and reconnaissance for U.S. and NATO forces, he said. The task force is made up of land-based maritime patrol aircraft that operate over the Mediterranean, mostly in anti-submarine, reconnaissance, surveillance and mining roles.

"They're out there looking at vessels transiting the high seas, looking for the potential bad actors," said the CTF-67 commander, Navy Capt. Robert Lally.

But the versatile P-3 aircraft, originally made to hunt for subs, doesn't have to stick to the high seas to track the enemy, as was proven in missions flown over Afghanistan, Iraq and Liberia, he said.

"The concept is to search, locate, trace and put a ship in tow," said Lally, who moved to Sigonella this fall from Japan to command the task force. "The same concept can be put in practice over land. [The aircraft] can provide the eyes over the horizon."

The task force, one of eight units under the U.S. Sixth Fleet command, provides tactical mission support to both U.S. and NATO maritime patrol aircraft, said Lally, who is known as "commander," a courtesy title that harkens to the late 18th century when the Navy's highest rank was captain, and those in command of squadrons of ships or aircraft were called commanders.

Sailors assigned to CTF-67 also are helping the U.S. Coast Guard and El Salvadoran mili-

tary detect vessels that might be transporting narcotics. Some soon will deploy to Africa to join the USS *Donay S. Lanier* in the Gulf of Guinea to help African nations boost maritime security, Lally said.

CTF-67 also participates in a variety of NATO and coalition exercises, and now are gearing up for next month's annual exercise Noble Manner with militaries from Canada, France, Portugal and Italy.

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'Mad Foxes': World travelers in the war on terror

BY SANDRA JONTZ
Stars and Stripes

NAVAL AIR STATION SIGONELLA, Sicily — The "Mad Foxes" have traveled from El Salvador to Bahrain to help fight the global war on terror.

The 430 sailors of Patrol Squadron 5 — though based at Naval Air Station, Jacksonville, Fla. — are currently flying their four P-3 Orions out of Sigonella during a six-month routine deployment.

The unit's sailors, such as Petty Officer 3rd Class Jeremy Fox, have been trekking around the world.

Fox, 21, an aviation electrician's mate, spent about a month-and-a-half at the end of last year in El Salvador maintaining one of the squadron's aircraft that was aiding the U.S. Coast Guard and El Salvadoran military to track vessels possibly smuggling narcotics.

And while he might not be on the front lines, Fox said, he's out there making a difference and seeing the world — two reasons why he joined the service more than three years ago.

The squadron got its name in 1948 after being equipped with the first Lockheed P2V Magnetic Anomaly Detector, or MAD — a device that can detect a submerged submarine.

The Sigonella deployment, which started in early December, has some sailors working outside their rates.

Petty Officer 3rd Class David Bergeron, an aviation electronics technician by trade, has taken on the task as the "barracks super."

"I'm the quality-of-life guy at the barracks, trying to keep everyone happy. If they're happy there, they're happy here," said the 22-year-old sailor during an recent interview at the squadron's hangar.

No one VP squadron calls Sigonella home, at least not for long. A new one rotates in every six months, providing the surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities needed to meet requirements for the U.S. Sixth Fleet.

The reason for the move is that it's cheaper for the Navy to deploy a squadron from its home base than to pay the permanent change-of-station costs to base sailors and their families at Sigonella, said Navy Capt. Robert Lally, commanding officer of Combined Task Force 67. The deployed squadrons fall under his command.

Deploying to places such as Sigonella can be tough on the squadron's members, said Cmdr. Sean Cannon, the squadron's commanding officer.

"Our biggest challenge to that is this is not our hangar, and we have to get used to working in someone else's home," he said.

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Marines from the 11th Marine Expeditionary Force carry their gear with their families Sunday after arriving at Camp Pendleton, Calif., after an eight-month deployment in Iraq.



It's Christmastime for Marines back from Iraq

BY SETH HETTENA
The Associated Press

CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. — Even if it is February, it's Christmastime in the home of Marine Lance Cpl. Victor Oseto.

The 21-year-old returned home Sunday, and the celebrations that were put on hold can finally begin. His stocking and the stocking of his twin brother, also a Marine, have been waiting over the fireplace.

Nancy Oseto will be cooking up her traditional, if belated, Christmas prime rib dinner later this month. First, though, she plans to serve her son some Thanksgiving turkey.

Nearly 180 Marines with the 11th Marine Expeditionary Force's battalion landing team returned Sunday from an eight-month deployment to Iraq. Seven Marines with the battalion were killed.

The survivors, marching three abreast in their desert cammies, were quickly engulfed by screaming and cheering loved ones.

Lance Cpl. Gabriel Aponte will be having Christmas on Feb. 20, said his mother, Regina Aponte. The Apontes bought a fake tree for the first time this year so they could celebrate Christmas in their home from Iraq. "You find special ways to make them a part of Christmas," she said.

The tree is still up in the home of Navy Hospital Corpsman Ben Powers, who turned 23 on Christmas Day — a double celebration the family will make up. There was catching-up of another sort to do, as well. Boys were coming home as men.

"I'm anxious to see how he's changed," Nancy Oseto said as she waited for her son in a gymnasium. "I know he's seen a lot since he left. ... He's an adult now. I can't call him my baby anymore."

Adm. Clark to retire

WASHINGTON — Adm. Vern Clark, the Navy's top officer, said Monday he will retire this summer after five years as chief of naval operations — the second-longest tenure in the history of the Navy.

Clark, 60, started in the job July 21, 2000, three months before the terrorist attack on the USS Cole in Aden, Yemen, that killed 17 sailors. He has been considered an innovative leader who has fundamentally altered the way the Navy maintains the combat readiness of its 12 aircraft carriers.

The Sioux City, Iowa, native said he has submitted his retirement papers but not set a specific date. The only Navy chief to serve longer was Adm. Arleigh Burke, from August 1955 to August 1961.

School applications drop

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — Applications for the Class of 2009 at the Naval Academy fell 20 percent from the year before, a drop mirrored by all of the nation's other military colleges.

As of its Jan. 31 application deadline, the Annapolis academy had received 11,140 applications, down from 13,922 at the same time last year. The slump is the first in four years for the academy, which saw a surge in applications

after the 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington.

In the past year, at least five Naval Academy graduates have been killed in the war in Iraq — the first combat deaths the school has seen since 1983.

GI shoots duo, kills self

FAYETTEVILLE, N.C. — A Fort Bragg soldier — once implicated as a teenager in a notorious New Jersey rape case — shot and wounded his estranged wife and her boyfriend, then killed himself, authorities said.

Sgt. Richard Timothy Corcoran, 34, entered wife Michele A. Corcoran's house Thursday night and shot William Paul Seifert several times. Michele Corcoran was outside, where she was shot in the arm, said Cumberland County sheriff's Maj. Sam Pennica. Corcoran then went back inside the house and shot himself, he said.

Seifert, a Fort Bragg soldier, was taken to Cape Fear Valley Medical Center. Michele Corcoran, 30, was treated and released. The Corcorans' 7-month-old baby was in the house but not hurt.

Richard Corcoran had charged dropped against him in a 1989 case in Glen Ridge, N.J., in which a group of high school athletes allegedly raped a mentally retarded teenage girl with a broom and a baseball bat.

From The Associated Press

IN THE STATES

Deficit-cutting measures tough to see, critics say

BY DAVID ESPO
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush gave faint promises Monday to the deficit-cutting measures contained in his own budget. Not surprisingly, congressional Democrats were far less polite.

Bush's claim to cut government red ink in half over five years omits the cost of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq beyond Sept. 30. It reckons, implausibly, that neither he nor the Republicans who control Congress will want new tax cuts in future years.

It underestimates by many billions the money needed for Social Security overhaul. And it assumes that the GOP-controlled Congress will send veterans a new \$2.1 billion bill for health care through 2010.

It also assumes that lawmakers will acquire discipline when it comes to hometown projects.

If the numbers in Bush's glossy budget book weren't clear enough about administration goals, the president personally supplied the emphasis.

"Our priorities are winning the war on terror, protecting our homeland, growing our economy," said the chief executive who seeks increased spending on defense and homeland security, and wants previously enacted tax cuts made permanent.

The budget "focuses on results... It's a budget that reduces and eliminates redundancy," he said. That's code for merging some programs, eliminating others and squeezing domestic programs generally.

Finally, Bush got to the deficit, making it fifth in line in his prepared recitation.

"People on both sides of the aisle have called upon the administration to submit a budget that helps meet our obligations of — our goal of reducing the deficit in

half over a five-year period, and this budget does just that," he said.

If the targets are met, the budget book says, the remaining deficit will be "lower than all but seven of the last 25 years."

As a rousing endorsement, that might rate a 25 on a scale of 1 down to 25.

Analysis

Democrats reacted like they had been handed a club to use against a president who just won re-election and led the GOP to bigger congressional majorities.

Sen. Kent Conrad of North Dakota, the senior Democrat on the Budget Committee, said deficits will be far greater than the administration estimates. If Bush's plans were adopted, he forecast ominously, "deficits and debt would continue to explode at an unsustainable rate and the nation's long-term economic security would be threatened."

Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the second ranking Democrat in the House, added, "In four short years, this administration has turned record budget surpluses into deficits as fast as the eye can see."

Yes, and won four more years in office, after an election run on personal character and issues ranging from the war in Iraq to the threat of terrorist attack and the economy. All of those are presumably more tangible to voters than the deficit.

"It's a theoretical concept as opposed to a clear-cut issue," said David Winston, a Republican pollster. He also suggested deficits were a political stalking horse.

"Democrats are interested in the deficit not because of the deficit but because they want to stop Republican tax cuts. And Republicans are focused on the deficit not because they're focused on the deficit but because they want to stop Democratic spending," he said.



Deiter Zetsche, president/CEO of DaimlerChrysler introduces President Bush at the Detroit Economic Club in Detroit, Mich. Bush was in Detroit one day after sending a \$2.57 trillion federal budget proposal to lawmakers on Capitol Hill.

AP

Bush: Congress must use more spending discipline

BY NEDRA PICKLER

The Associated Press

DETROIT — President Bush said Tuesday that Congress must bring discipline to the federal budget and cut failing or unnecessary programs even if they have laudable goals.

"It is essential that those who spend the money in Washington adhere to this principle — a taxpayer dollar ought to be spent wisely or not spent at all," Bush told the Detroit Economic Club.

Bush sent Congress a \$2.57 trillion budget Monday that drastically cuts or eliminates 150 federal programs, including subsidies paid to farmers, health programs for poor people and veterans and spending on the environment and education.

Bush said every program on the chopping block is failing to meet its goals, duplicates other available services or is not an essential priority for the federal gov-

ernment. Bush singled out farm subsidies. "No farmer should get \$250,000 a year in subsidy," Bush said, adding that cutting the subsidies will save taxpayers \$12.2 billion over the next decade.

Bush also cited Even Star, a 16-year-old literacy program for poor families. Bush said everyone wants poor people to learn to read, but three evaluations have made it clear that Even Star is not working.

"Congress needs to join with me to bring real spending discipline to the federal budget," Bush said to applause.

Bush's slimmed-down budget proposal is just one of the conservative fiscal policies he plans to push in his second term as he tries to continue expanding the economy and improve the slowly recovering job market. Bush also wants tax cuts, deregulation, free trade and more modern training for the work force.

Questions about the health of

the jobs market was a hot-button issue in the presidential campaign and confronted by Bush's loss in Michigan.

Employment figures released last week provided a reprieve to the White House. While the addition of 146,000 jobs was small, it gave Bush a net gain of 119,000 jobs during his first term and allowed him to escape being the first president since Herbert Hoover to have a net loss of jobs on his watch.

Gus Faucher, a senior economist at Economy.com, said Bush's plan to keep spending below the rate of inflation for programs outside defense and homeland security is a change from the first term, when he oversaw large increases in federal spending.

Ron Blackwell, chief economist at the AFL-CIO, said he doubted that Bush's proposals "are responding to the very unbalanced and stagnant economic figures from the point of view of working families."

Proposal calls for raising airline fares to fund Homeland Security budget

BY LARA JAKES JORDAN

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Homeland Security Department is seeking money and employees to secure U.S. borders under President Bush's budget, while raising airline passenger fees, as a Senate panel endorsed a new leader for the agency.

Monday's \$34.2 billion budget request for 2006 also proposes reorganizing state and local funding formulas to give the most money to high-risk areas.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, meanwhile, endorsed Michael Chertoff's nomination as the department's secretary, 14-0.

Committee Chairman Susan Collins, R-Maine, said the full Senate could be asked as early as Tuesday for a confirmation vote and predicted Chertoff will be approved easily. He would succeed Tom Ridge, who resigned.

Homeland Security asks Congress for a 6.8 percent funding increase for the department from current levels — on top of \$6.9 billion required by law.

"We are safer, but we are not safe," Acting Homeland Security Secretary James Loy said, unveiling the budget plan.

The budget plan calls for a 10 percent increase — to \$16 billion — in border and transportation security spending. It would add 210 new border patrol agents to fill gaps along the southwest border and coastal areas; step up border surveillance by \$19.8 million; and install technology to help customs and border patrol agents detect weapons of mass destruction and prevent cargo before ships reach U.S. ports.

Most of the department's spending hike would be paid by collecting \$4.8 billion in fees — largely by adding \$3 to the cost of airline tickets for passengers. Fees would increase in 2006 from \$2.50 to \$5.50 for each leg of a round-trip ticket, and from \$5 to \$8 for passengers making several stops on a one-way ticket.

"A tax on travelers is a tax on airlines," James C. May, president and chief executive officer of the Air Transport Association, said in protest. "We believe any new tax or fee raises ticket prices and the cost of airlines doing business."

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Defrocked priest found guilty of rape

BY DENISE LAVOIE

The Associated Press

CAMBRIDGE, Mass. — It took nearly four decades after Paul Shanley was first accused of molesting children for him to be brought to trial. Now, at the age of 74, the defrocked priest could spend what remains of his life in prison.

Prosecutors have not said what sentence they will recommend to the judge for Shanley, perhaps the most notorious figure in the sex scandal that rocked the Boston Archdiocese three years ago.

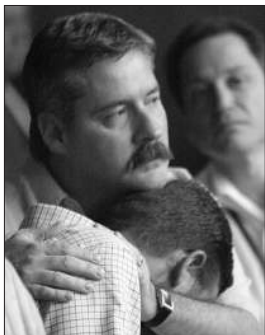
He could get up to life in prison when he is sentenced Tuesday for repeatedly raping and fondling the accuser at his Roman Catholic church during the 1980s. Middlesex District Attorney Martha Coakley said only that the recommended sentence "will be significant."

His accuser, now 27, put his head down and sobbed as the verdicts were read Monday after a trial that hinged on the reliability of what the man claimed were recovered memories of decades-old abuse.

Shanley, 74, showed no emotion as he stood next to his lawyer, Frank Mondano. Bail was revoked and Shanley was immediately let to jail.

"It appears that the absence of a case is not an impediment to securing a conviction," Mondano said, vowing to appeal.

Shanley's accuser testified for three days, at times sobbing on the stand and begging the judge not to force him to testify in graphic detail. He said Shanley



Courtroom spectators John Harris, bottom, and Roberto Costello react to the guilty verdict in the trial of defrocked priest Paul Shanley in Cambridge, Mass.

pulled him out of Sunday morning catechism classes beginning at age 6 and molested him in the bathroom, the rectory, the confessional and the pews.

Victoria Blier said she and fellow jurors were swayed by the accuser, believing the man would not have come a \$500,000 settlement with the archdiocese nearly a year ago.

"I think a persuasive sentiment was he had already gotten a half-million-dollar settlement and he had no reason whatsoever to pursue this criminal case, and he knew that pursuing the criminal case was going to lay a painful life bare," she said.

Shanley, once a long-haired, jeans-wearing "street priest" who worked with Boston's troubled youth, sat stoically for most of the trial, listening to his accuser's testimony with the help of a hearing aid.

Dismissal of gay policy suit sought

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Bush administration on Monday asked a federal court to dismiss a lawsuit challenging the Pentagon's 11-year-old "don't ask, don't tell" policy.

The government said last year's landmark Supreme Court ruling that overturned state laws making gay sex a crime does not undercut the military's policy that allows gays and lesbians to serve as long as they abstain from homosexual activity and don't reveal their sexual orientation.

Courts previously have upheld the policy, approved by Congress and put in place by the Clinton administration.

"These decisions are unaffected by the Supreme Court's decision," the administration said in a filing in U.S. District Court in Boston, where the lawsuit was filed.

Twelve gays expelled from the military because of their sexual orientation filed the legal challenge in December, citing the Supreme Court ruling that state laws making homosexual sex a crime were unconstitutional.

That decision overturned an earlier Supreme Court ruling that had upheld sodomy laws.

Two other lawsuits challenging the policy have been filed since the high court's reversal.

One was brought in California by the Log Cabin Republicans, a political organization for gays. The other was filed in the U.S. Court of Federal Claims,

which generally deals with cases involving money. That plaintiff, who was separated from the Army, is seeking to recover his pension and is challenging the ban in the process.

Dean now stands alone in race to lead DNC

BY WILL LESTER

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Tim Roemer, the only remaining opponent of one-time presidential candidate Howard Dean to be chairman of the Democratic National Committee, said Monday he's bowing out of the race — but he offered a warning to Democrats.

Dean, the former governor of Vermont, is expected to win the party chairmanship in Saturday's election.

Roemer, a former congressman from Indiana and a member of the Sept. 11 commission, said Democrats must be more inclusive in their outreach to fast-growing parts of the country.

"I got into this race five weeks ago to talk about the devastating loss we experienced in November,"



Dean

Roemer said. "It was not about 60,000 votes in Ohio," a reference to the margin by which Democratic candidate Sen. John Kerry lost that state.

"It was about losing 97 of the 100 fastest growing counties in the country," he said. "If that's a trend in business or politics you're in trouble."

Republicans are in the strongest position they've been in since the early 20th century, Roemer said. Roemer, who said top Democrats in Congress encouraged him to enter the chairman's race, said he wants to strengthen Democrats' position on national security.

"If there's one reason Senator Kerry lost the presidential race, it was because he failed to make the American people feel safer," Roemer said, adding that he also wanted to encourage talk within the party about developing a stronger position on values.

Roemer said he hoped to make the party more inclusive, especially on the issue of abortion. He opposes abortion except in cases of rape, incest and the health of the mother. His opposition to abortion rights sparked early opposition in the race from pro-choice advocates.

Damp but festive, Mardi Gras rolls into New Orleans

BY MARY FOSTER

The Associated Press

NEW ORLEANS — Gray skies didn't slow the partying. Neither do a few rain drops.

A light rain Monday made the festivities leading up to Mardi Gras a little messier. The parade routes were muddy, but crowds made the best of the weather, pulling out umbrellas and rain jackets. But the show went on, as did the drinking, eating and shouts of "Happy Mardi Gras!"

"Rain? Who cares," said Tina Black, 30, of Los Angeles. "As long as it doesn't get cold. I have a really skinny costume and I hate cold."

Black and thousands of others lined up to watch the Proteus and Orpheus lavish parades, headed by entertainer Harry Connick Jr.

Fireworks filled the sky while strollers on Bourbon Street — beers in hand — tried to grab the strings of gold, green and purple beads tossed from the balconies above.

"This is it baby," said Paul Perlin, 22, of Dallas, from his lawn chair along the parade route on St. Charles Avenue. "You're either ready or you stay home. It's no place for the weak."

Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday, is one of New Orleans' biggest tourist events. Merchants and bartenders, however, said business was brisk in the French Quarter, though down from previous years.

At last: the weather and the calendar — the annual pre-Lenten bash falls early this year.

"It's definitely off," said Fallon Daunhauer, a bartender at Johnny White's in the French Quarter for 21 years. "It's not the best weather and it's so early. Too close to Christmas, not close enough to spring break to get the college kids in."

Still, workers rushed to stock their shelves and clean up for the final time before Ash Wednesday. Piles of trash bags were hauled out of bars, cases of drinks were hauled in.

"We've got to get it done and get out of here before noon," said Phillip Ocburn of Crescent Crown Distributors. "After that forget it."

Earlier Monday, Beverly and Chester Lott munched beignets. The Mississippi couple had already seen five parades and what they called some fantastic street theater.

"We love it. It's the best time you can have anywhere," said Beverly Lott, sporting a huge orange wig. "We came for the first time last year, and plan to be back every year."

A daylong party was held on the banks of the Mississippi River with music and the landing of the faux royalty for the Zulu and Rex parades, the two biggest to roll Tuesday.

There were no reports of violence, one day after a man was shot along a parade route near the French Quarter. Police released little information about Sunday's shooting, however.

Last year, a 20-year-old New Orleans woman was shot and killed during a parade on St. Charles Avenue.



Michelle Levine of New Orleans dances her way through the streets of New Orleans during the Mardi Gras celebration Tuesday.

Advocates push for change in Arizona spousal rape law

BY MICHELLE ROBERTS
The Associated Press

FLAGSTAFF, Ariz. — The 49-year-old woman was awakened around midnight by an assailant who choked her, dragged her by the hair and raped her so many times before the sun came up that she lost count, police say. When she asked if he would live, her attacker allegedly told her: "We'll see."

Usually, rapes like the one described by the woman in September would be punishable by up to 14 years in prison in Arizona. But the man accused in the attack was the woman's husband, meaning the crime alleged is considered spousal rape.

The punishment: no more than 1½ years behind bars, and perhaps no prison time at all.

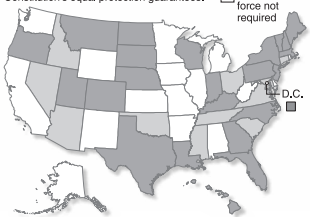
Prosecutors in Coconino County, where the alleged attack occurred, say the disparity is unconstitutional. So in addition to bringing kidnapping and assault charges against their 45-year-old man, they have charged him under the standard rape law, setting the stage for a legal battle over whether Arizona's spousal rape statute violates the Constitution's equal protection guarantees.

Reviewing spousal rape

Prosecutors in a spousal rape case in Arizona are challenging that state's law, which distinguishes between spousal and non-spousal rape cases, on grounds that Arizona's sentencing guidelines violate the Constitution's equal protection guarantees.

Treatment of spousal rape

- ☐ Must be force/ threat of force
- ☐ Same as rape of other victims
- ☐ Different crime, force not required



Source: American Prosecutors Research Institute

AP

tion's equal protection guarantees.

"The current statutes are extremely unfair and unconstitutional, and they need to be changed," said David Rozema,

chief deputy in the Coconino County prosecutor's office.

About half of the states treat spousal rape differently, according to the American Prosecutors Research Institute.

Legal loopholes leave voyeurism victims 'helpless'

BY KRISTEN GELINEAU
The Associated Press

RICHMOND, Va. — Jeffrey Swisher was caught using a video-camera to peer up the skirts of teenagers at a mall, and law enforcement officials were eager to put him behind bars for a long time.

His punishment: 10 days in jail. A loophole in Virginia law meant prosecutors were only able to convict Swisher of disorderly conduct.

Prosecutors across the United States are vexed by similar loopholes preventing them from imposing harsh — or often any — punishments on similar defendants. Victims of video voyeurism are often horrified to find out that what has happened to them isn't even illegal in most states.

"It was really frustrating and depressing," said Jolene Jang of Seattle, who was secretly filmed five years ago by a man who lowered his camera to shoot up her dress. "I felt helpless."

The Internet has only exacerbated the problem. Type the words "upskirt" and "downblouse" into the search engine Google, and millions of Web sites pop up.

Lawmakers nationwide have begun to respond, reworking laws written before advancements in camera technology.

Most states with video voyeurism laws prohibit unauthorized videotaping or photographing of people who are in private areas, such as dressing rooms, or in situations where they have "a reasonable expectation of privacy."

The description has been too broad for several state courts, which have ruled people do not have a reasonable expectation of privacy underneath their clothing when they're in public.

That's what happened in Jang's case. In 2002, the Washington state Supreme Court ruled that taking pictures up a woman's skirt in a public place isn't illegal. The decision prompted a public outcry and lawmakers quickly amended the law.

Swisher's case highlighted the loophole in Virginia's law. "It's certainly immoral, it's certainly wrong, but under the code, it's just not a written offense," said Del. John Cosgrove, who is sponsoring a bill that would close the loophole. "We're trying to tighten the code so some pervert isn't able to do that."

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IN THE WORLD

Rice seeks better relations with Europe

BY ANNE GEARAN
The Associated Press

PARIS — Trying to mend fences with Europe, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Tuesday "it is time to turn away from the disagreements of the past" that alienated longtime allies over the U.S. invasion of Iraq.

France was the most vocal opponent of President Bush's handling of the war with Iraq, and the new secretary of state deliberately chose Paris for the major address of her first official tour of Europe.

But Rice did not back down from Bush's pledge to spread freedom across the globe and added a challenge to Europeans.

"America stands ready to work with Europe on our common agenda and Europe must stand ready to work with America," she said in a speech at Paris's Science Politique.

"After all, history will surely judge us not by our old disagreements, but by our new achievements," she said.

Science Politique, known in France as Science Po, is a school of political science that has been at the center of recent debate over America's reach and power. Some 500 students and intellectuals were attending and Rice was to take questions from the au-

Deal in works to release French detainees

PARIS — The United States has agreed to hand over to France the last three French detainees at the U.S. Naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, judicial officials and their lawyers said Tuesday. The French Foreign Ministry, however, said that a deal was premature.

The judicial officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the agreement was finalized just as Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice was coming to Paris for talks Tuesday with President Jacques Chirac and his foreign minister.

Her visit is part of efforts between the historic allies to repair ties strained over Iraq. They also have been at odds over fighting terrorism.

The date of the handover of Mustafai Patel, Ridouane Khaliel and Khalid Ben

Mustafa has not been finalized, but their return is expected soon, the judicial officials said.

"Things are headed in the right direction, and we are now discussing the details," said William Bourdon, an attorney for Al Patel, who has both French and Indian nationality.

Added Paul-Albert Twines, attorney for Khalid: "The political aspect is there. We are waiting for them impatiently."

But Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Cecile Pozzo di Borgo said she could not confirm a deal.

"I don't have any elements that would allow me to confirm that deal," she said. "Let's wait for the talks to take place, we will see which subjects are brought up."

— The Associated Press

tive relationship that is very effective on world peace," she said. "When we disagree, we still disagree as friends."

In her speech, Rice said the founders of both the French and U.S. republics were inspired by the same values — freedom, democracy and human dignity — and by each other. History has shown that revolutions striving for freedom can start in mundane ways but need outside help, she said.

"In my own experience, a black woman named Rosa Parks was just tired one day of being told to sit in the back of the bus," Rice said. "So she refused to move, and she launched a revolution for freedom in the American South."

Similar was the power of Lech Walesa and his labor strike in Poland, Afghans and Iraqis who recently voted after years of repression and ordinary men and women who helped bring down the Berlin Wall in 1989.

"Yet that day of freedom in November 1989 could never have happened without the full support of the free nations of the West," she said.

"Time and again in our shared history, Americans and Europeans have enjoyed our greatest successes for ourselves and for others, when we refused to accept an unacceptable status quo, but instead put our values to work for the cause of freedom."

dience.

Following her speech, Rice answered a series of questions, ranging from Iraq's effort to establish a democracy to the development of biological weapons. She told the students and guests that the Iraqis now would engage in a political process to form a gov-

ernment that was not at odds with religion.

"What we must understand there is no inherent conflict between Islam and democracy," she said.

Rice also explained why she chose Paris considering the rift over Iraq between the two nations. "This is a deep broad and ac-



Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, left, and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon shake hands prior to their delegations' meeting Tuesday at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt.

Sharon, Abbas agree to cease-fire

BY LARA SUKHTIAN
The Associated Press

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, Egypt — Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas declared Tuesday that their people would stop all military and violent actions against each other, pledging to break a four-year cycle of bloodshed and get peace talks back on track.

With the flags of their countries whipping in the wind, Sharon and Abbas met face-to-face at a Mideast summit, smiling broadly as they leaned across a long white table to shake hands. In one sign the talks went well, Egypt and Jordan announced afterward that they would return their ambassadors to Israel after a four-year absence — possibly within days.

But the Palestinian militant group Hamas immediately called the deal into question, saying it would not be bound by the cease-fire declarations and was unsure what Israel would do next.

As part of the deal, Israel will hand over control of five West Bank towns to the Palestinians within three weeks and immediately release 500 Palestinian prisoners.

Those agreements, and the sight of Abbas and Sharon shaking hands, were the clearest signs yet of momentum in the peace process after Yasser

Arafat's death in November and Abbas' election to succeed him in January.

One Israeli official, Gideon Meir, said "there was a great atmosphere in the talks ... smiles and joking."

An invitation to both sides to meet separately with President Bush at the White House this spring added another round of momentum on the summit's eve.

"We have agreed on halting all violent actions against Palestinians and Israelis wherever they are," Abbas declared in a statement made after the meetings, as he, Sharon, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Jordan's King Abdullah II sat around a round table.

Sharon made a similar pledge.

"Today, in my meeting with chairman Abbas, we agreed that all Palestinians will stop all acts of violence against all Israelis everywhere, and, at the same time, Israel will cease all its military activity against all Palestinians everywhere," he said.

Abbas said he expected the cease-fire pledges to pave the way for resumption of talks on so-called "final status" issues such as borders, refugees and Jerusalem's status, all within the context of the Mideast "road map" to peace. Sharon said he also expected the deal Tuesday to set the stage for the implementation of the "road map."

Kuwait threatens papers for divulging security info

BY DIANA ELIAS
The Associated Press

KUWAIT CITY — Kuwait's Cabinet will suspend or shut down newspapers that publish information about ongoing investigations with suspected terrorists or any unauthorized security information, the prime minister warned in remarks published Tuesday.

Sheik Sabah Al Ahmed Al Sabah, speaking with editors-in-chief of the country's seven daily newspapers, also outlined other measures Kuwait is taking — including closing unlicensed mosques and reviewing religious school textbooks — to fight terrorism. All the papers reported the meeting.

This small oil-rich state since last month has been locked in an

unprecedented battle against Muslim militants accused of planning to attack the country's state security as well as American civilians and members of the U.S. military serving here or on their way to neighboring Iraq.

"What a journalist considers a scoop could ... endanger the safety of security men or the investigations with suspects in custody, and help fugitives still being chased," Al-Rai Al-Aam daily quoted Sheik Sabah as saying.

Several of Kuwait's privately owned newspapers have published details about investigations and police raids without identifying their sources. Some have mentioned names of security officers and details about the operations, including how suspects were moving around Kuwait and in which cars.

Official: Iran seeks to resolve problems with United States

The Associated Press

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's top nuclear negotiator said Tuesday that Tehran wanted to resolve decades of differences with the United States and also warned that a U.S. military strike would not be able to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities.

"We are not seeking tension with the United States," Hasan Rowhani told state-run Iranian television. "We are seeking to resolve our problems with America but it's the Americans who don't want problems to be resolved."

Iran's top leaders have tried in recent days to ease increasing tensions with Washington amid a continuing war of words.

President Bush last week accused Iran of being "the world's primary state sponsor of terror."

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said Friday that a military strike against Iran was "simply not on the agenda at this point," but Bush has said his administration wouldn't take any option off the table.

"There is no problem in today's world that can't be resolved," Rowhani insisted.

Baby with fused legs set for surgery

By CARLA SALAZAR

The Associated Press

LIMA, Peru — Milagros Cerro smiles, babbles and fidgets in the arms of her mother like any healthy 9-month-old, but she is no ordinary baby. Milagros was born with her legs fused in a tight coating of skin — giving her the appearance of a mermaid.

"When I saw her for the first time, I felt pain," said Milagros' mother, 19-year-old Sara Arancibia. "In that moment I thought, 'What will she do with her life? Was God going to take her away or not? Was she was taken to live or not?'"

A team of Peruvian doctors believe Milagros is the perfect candidate for surgery to separate her legs.

They plan to attempt the operation Feb. 24 and hope that after a

few years of treatment, Milagros will be able to live a normal life.

"Our dream is for Milagros to be able to run, walk and play like every normal child," said Dr. Luis Rubio, the leader of the medical team.

Milagros, who looks months younger than her actual age, was born with a rare congenital defect known as sirenomelia, or "mermaid syndrome." The condition occurs in one out of every 70,000 births and there are only three known cases of children with the affliction alive in the world today.

The deformity is almost always fatal within days of delivery due to serious defects to vital organs. But Milagros — whose name means "miracles" in Spanish — has survived.

Although most of Milagros' organs, including her heart and

lungs, are in perfect condition, she was born with serious internal defects, including a deformed left kidney and a very small right one located very low in her body.

In addition, her digestive and urinary tracts and her genitals share a single tube.

Sirenomelia is usually fatal because of complications associated with abnormal kidney and bladder development and function.

Milagros' doctors have managed to save off kidney and bladder infections, allowing her to continue to grow, Rubio said.

His medical team has been studying the case of Tiffany Yorks, a 16-year-old American girl born with sirenomelia whose legs were successfully separated when she was a baby. Rubio said Yorks' surgeon, Mutaz Habaib, has provided invaluable advice to the Peruvian doctors.



Peruvian doctor Luis Rubio plays with 9-month-old baby Milagros Cerro, who has sirenomelia, or "mermaid syndrome."

Chopper pizza delivery

LONDON — A British military pilot who used an army helicopter to make a pizza delivery has been disciplined, the Ministry of Defense said Tuesday.

The Lynx helicopter was on a map-reading training exercise in eastern England on Jan. 25 when it made a landing in the Stanford area, a Ministry of Defense spokesman said.

"The pilot took it upon himself to basically deliver this pizza," the spokesman said. "He has been made aware that the chain of command doesn't condone his actions and has been disciplined."

He didn't give details of the punishment.

The Sun newspaper reported that the pilot, a lieutenant, was delivering the pizza to his girlfriend, a cadet officer.

License to clone

LONDON — The British government on Tuesday gave the creator of Dolly the Sheep a license to clone human embryos for medical research into the cause of motor neuron disease.

Ian Wilmut, who led the team that created Dolly at Scotland's Roslin Institute in 1996, and motor neuron expert Christopher Shaw of the Institute of Psychiatry in London, plan to clone embryos to study how nerve cells go awry to cause motor neuron disease. The experiments do not involve creating cloned babies.

Engraving found in cave

LONDON — An engraving thought to be 10,000 years old has been uncovered in a cave, British researchers said Monday.

The series of inscribed crosses — found on the wall of the Avenue Hole cave in Somerset, southwest England — are believed to date from the early Mesolithic period just after the Ice Age.

Jill Cook from the British Museum's Department of Prehistory and Europe said the discovery gave an insight into an early form of communication.

"The few lines that form this panel are a signature from the period right at the end of the last Ice Age when the present period of warm climate was beginning," Cook said.

Villager kills panther

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia — A villager killed a panther using a spear after the animal attacked his friend in a remote Malaysian jungle, a news report said Tuesday.

Malek Saina, 30, said he was searching for food when a panther attacked him in eastern Pahang state on Saturday, the Star daily reported.

"The panther managed to bite my thigh and I screamed in pain," Malek told the daily. He said he could not reach his spear, which he'd left near a tree.

His screams alerted a passing friend who rushed over, grabbed the spear and stabbed the panther twice, killing the animal, the report said.

Malek was hospitalized with thigh injuries, but was in stable condition, a hospital spokesman in Pahang said on condition of anonymity.

From The Associated Press

CAREER CENTER

Vice President, Operations (Southwest Asia)

USO has recently been called upon to provide greater assistance to military personnel permanently stationed in or transiting the region of SWA. Some additional centers have been added to our operations and further expansion in the region is likely, to support the deployed military.

USO is now seeking a new Vice President to provide operational oversight, financial guidance, and strategic management to all USO centers and Center Directors/Managers in the SWA Region to ensure quality delivery of mission focused, cost efficient programs and services. The VP will measure and validate these programs, services, and center operations for effectiveness and efficiency recommending investment and improvement in existing centers where necessary.

Key responsibilities in this position include: reviewing military/USO interaction for the SWA region; conduct feasibility studies to determine where USO centers should close and/or open; build & maintain regional budget, attaining stability for all centers; prepare & submit financial, operational & other reports as required; manage professional, paid & volunteer staff to include recruitment, training, supervision, and appraisal; represent USO directly to senior military command in SWA region and to other relevant agencies.

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Send resumes to USO; HR dept. at or fax to 703-908-6401 by Feb. 11th. You will be contacted if selected for an interview. No phone calls please. E/O/E. AA.

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Congratulations to the troops

To U.S. servicemen serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom:

On Jan. 30, Iraqis here, and in 18 countries across the globe, went to the polls to elect Prime Minister Ayad Allawi, called "the first true and free elections here in our country."

This was a great victory for the Iraqi people and for freedom itself. It was about the Iraqi people taking charge of their future. It was an Iraqi success.

You and the Iraqi security forces were key elements in helping the people of Iraq arrive at this momentous point in their history. Since freeing Iraq from tyranny in 2003, you and those who preceded you, have diligently worked in partnership with increasingly capable Iraqi forces to create a security environment that permits the political and economic development that the Iraqi people desire. Your success is evidenced by the election.

The election was an important step in the journey the Iraqi people embarked on when authority was transferred from the Coalition Provisional Authority to the Iraqi interim government in June. The next steps will be the seating of the new assembly and government, the drafting of a constitution, and the choosing of a constitutionally elected government in December.

While there is more work to do, Iraq's success on Jan. 30 is both extraordinary and irreversible. Our mission is to sustain and expand this success as we begin the progressive transition of the security and reconstruction of Iraq. I have no doubt that you will continue to prove worth of the trust accorded us by the Iraqi people and by our countrymen and women back home.

Congratulations on a job well done!

You helped prove a historic day.

Army Gen. George W. Casey Jr.

Commander, Multi-National Force-Iraq

'Separation' isn't mentioned

The writer of "Keep religion, state separate" (letter, Dec. 19) relies on the American Civil Liberties Union Web site as proof positive that the ACLU is a great and wonderful organization.

The letter writer quotes the ACLU to convince us that the ACLU is the, dare I say it, bible when it comes to the Constitution. This is a flaw in logic in that it is an appeal to authority on the ACLU using the ACLU as the authority — very odd.

Let's put the 1st Amendment out there so everyone can see it:

"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof, or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Where in this passage is there a re-

Tell us what you think

Stars and Stripes welcomes your comments on editorials and columns that are published in the newspaper, and values letters on topics of importance in the lives of our readers. All letters must be signed, and must include the writer's address or base and telephone number. Please limit all letters to 300 words. We reserve the right to edit letters for length, taste and clarity.

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quirement for separation of church and state? "Separation of church and state" is not in that passage or anywhere in the Constitution or its amendments. Based solely on the words, you're likely to not to conclude that the First Amendment is about the government out of religion, not vice versa.

This is not a religious argument, so there is no need for the religious epithets the letter writer throws around. It's about what the words in the Constitution mean. If the letter writer, the ACLU and other like-minded people want to redress the government and add the words, "There shall be a separation, an impenetrable wall if you will, between church and state, and neither shall the two mix," that is their right. But those words are not in there now.

Doug Schumick
Stuttgart, Germany

Retired brass clearly partisan

Letter writer Gordon Uscier ("Questioning Gonzales justified," Feb. 3) correctly says that retired generals have the right to comment on this matter. But let us not forget that many of these gentlemen are partisans, men who have constantly shown their hostility to the conduct of the war in Iraq.

That they are former flag officers does not mean their comments are free of political animus. Indeed, we know that they represent [Bush] administration policies largely a repudiation of what they did while in command and a rejection of their advice since.

John Schuh
Lake Dallas, Texas

Mattis comments no surprise

Well, Lt. Gen. James Mattis certainly caused a stir recently in patriotic circles. As an experienced Marine commander who led troops in Afghanistan and Iraq, his comments about the joys and fun of

killing human beings were rather vulgar and gruesome. His assertion that is fun to shoot guys that "ain't got no manhood" makes one wonder if there are other military gentlemen in high or low position of like disposition.

Of course, we do have the evidence of similar thinking and behavior from the perpetrators of the Abu Ghraib incidents of prison abuse. Maybe the best for killing and abusing combatants and captives alike was combined itself with people like Lt. William Calley at My Lai in Vietnam is still much in evidence in our military.

Of course, do not mention this idea to the Texas Swift boaters who denied such a possibility in the recent presidential campaign. Perhaps Sen. John Kerry was right about American military behavior in Vietnam.

All pro-lifers who focus on the single issue of abortion might rightly examine pro-life issues in regard to American military behavior past and present. (By the way, that challenge is for George Bush and all church leaders who have remained silent on the moral issues concerning the pre-emptive war in Iraq based on false assumptions.)

That would be a real values discussion for people who are dropping smart bombs from the safety of 30,000 feet or picking off people with automatic weapons as if they were at a carnival target shoot.

Terrence Lauer
De Pere, Wis.

Service itself is recognition

The Combat Infantry Badge (otherwise referred to as the CIB) seems to be the topic of discussion as of late. It seems like everyone in the Army has put in his or her two cents' worth on this subject; guess it's time to hear mine now.

The name says it all: Combat Infantry Badge. Enough said. I am a logistics officer who has been deployed in Iraq, war on terrorism and I, like many others who hold a nonmilitary military occupational specialty, have been shot at and returned fire with the enemy. Do I think that I deserve the CIB? Not a bit.

One writer states that he thinks that he should receive the CIB because he has been out on convoys and has had mortar rounds land inside his forward operating base. Guess what, that is war! He should keep his head down and use his training.

The writer also states that he wants his "silly little badge" to make him feel proud of what he's done. If he can't feel proud of what he has done by just keeping over on his right shoulder as a permanent reminder of where he has been and what he has done, he needs to rethink why he serves. If he's in this business for the medals and badges, maybe he needs to find something else to do.

Capt. Heath Hawkes
Utapao, Thailand

By GARRY TRUDEAU

Doonesbury



GS Trudeau

OPINION

Search for WMD in Iraq no blueprint for Iran

BY DAVID KAY

One year ago I told the Senate Armed Services Committee that I had concluded "we were almost all wrong" at the time of the Iraq war about the country's activities with regard to weapons of mass destruction — and never more wrong than in the assessment that Iraq had a resurgent program on the verge of producing nuclear weapons. I testified about what I saw as the major reasons we got it so wrong, and I urged the establishment of an independent commission to examine this failure and begin the long-overdue process of adjusting our intelligence capabilities to the new national security environment we face. It is an environment dominated by too-easy access to weapons of mass destruction capabilities and to the means of concealing such capabilities from international inspection and national intelligence agencies.

A year later we are still awaiting the independent commission's report. The discussion of intelligence reform has focused on redundancy and additional structure on top of an eroded intelligence foundation. And now we hear the drumrolls again, this time announcing an accelerating nuclear weapons program in Iran.

There is an eerie similarity to the events preceding the Iraq war.

The International Atomic Energy Agency has announced that while Iran now admits having concealed for 18 years nuclear activities that should have been reported to the IAEA, it has found no evidence of a nuclear weapons program. Iran says it is now cooperating fully with international inspections, and it denies having anything but a peaceful nuclear energy program.

Vice President Dick Cheney is giving interviews and speeches that paint a stark picture of a soon-to-be nuclear-armed Iran and declaring that this is settling the Bush administration's tolerance.

Iranian elites are providing the press and governments with a steady stream of new "evidence" concerning Iran's nuclear

weapons activities. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has warned that Iran will not be allowed to use the cover of civilian nuclear power to acquire nuclear weapons, but says an attack on Iran is "not on the agenda at this point." U.S. allies, while saying they share the concern over Iran's nuclear ambitions, remain determined to pursue diplomacy and say they cannot conceive of any circumstance that would lead them to use military force. And the press is beginning to uncover U.S. moves that seem designed to lay the basis for military action against Iran.

Now is the time to recall what went wrong with the assessment of Iraq's WMD program and try to avoid repeating those mistakes in Iran. Five steps are essential.

First, accept the fact that the past cannot be undone. Iran has, by its own admission, engaged for at least 18 years in clandestine nuclear activities that now give it the basis, if it chooses, to pursue nuclear weapons. That knowledge cannot be eliminated, so it is nonsense to talk about eliminating Iran's nuclear capabilities short of war and occupation. The goal, and one that is reachable, is to craft a set of tools and transparency measures that so the U.S. nuclear activities to the larger world of peaceful nuclear activities that any attempt to push ahead on the weapons front would be detectable and very disruptive for Iran.

Second, acknowledge that dissidents and critics have their own agenda — regime change — and that before being accepted as truth any "evidence" they might supply concerning Iran's nuclear program must be tested and confirmed by other sources. And these other sources should not be, as they often were in the case of Iraq, simply other elites, or the same information being recycled among intelligence agencies.

Third, acknowledge what inspections by the IAEA can do, and do not designate the agency for what it cannot do. International inspection, when it works, is best at confirming whether a state is complying with its international obligations. It is not



equipped to uncover clandestine weapons programs. When Mohamed ElBaradei says his IAEA has found no evidence of an Iranian nuclear weapons program, he is speaking honestly as to the limitations of the powers of his inspectors. Rather than ridiculing him and the IAEA, we should acknowledge what they have accomplished in determining that Iran has not lived up to its obligations and concentrate on how we can use international inspections to uncover — more quickly, one hopes — any future violations.

Fourth, understand that overheard rhetoric from policy-makers and senior administration officials, unsupported by evidence that can stand international scrutiny, undermines the ability of the United States to halt Iran's nuclear activities. Having gone to the United Nations Security Council on the basis of flawed evidence to "prove" Iraq's WMD activities, it only invites derision to cite unsubstantiated exile reports to "prove" that Iran is developing nuclear weapons.

Fifth, a National Intelligence Estimate as

to Iran's nuclear activities should not be a rushed and cooked document used to justify the threat of military action. Now is the time for serious analysis that genuinely tries to pull together all the evidence and analytical skills of the vast U.S. intelligence community to reach the best possible judgment on the status of that program and the gaps in our knowledge. That assessment should not be led by a team that is trying to prove a case for its boss. Now is the time to reach outside the secret brotherhood and pull in respected outsiders to lead the assessment.

Nuclear weapons in the hands of Iran would be a grave danger to the world. That is not what is in doubt. What is in doubt is the ability of the U.S. government to honestly assess Iran's nuclear status and to craft a set of measures that will cope with that threat short of military action by the United States or Israel.

David Kay was the first leader of the Iraq Survey Group searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. He resigned in 2004. This column first appeared in The Washington Post.

Oil-for-food report rightly spreads around blame

The Washington Post

The first and most important point to make about the preliminary report on corruption in the United Nations oil-for-food program is that it is not a whitewash. Despite dark hints that Paul Volcker, the former Federal Reserve chairman who led the investigation, was too chummy with the U.N. bosses, Thursday's report is unusually blunt. Notably, it accused Benon Sevan of having received the rights to purchase millions of barrels of discounted oil from Iraqi officials while he was serving as the director of the oil-for-food program.

Suspicious that Kofi Annan, the U.N. secretary-general, would try to sweep the story under the carpet also have not proven correct. Annan has announced that he will pursue disciplinary proceedings against Sevan and other U.N. officials.

The question now is what, if anything, these findings say about the United Nations itself. Congressional critics who see something uniquely unusual in this report of U.N. corruption should look harder at the behavior of American, British and other companies in Iraq during that period. The vast majority of the oil smuggling had nothing to do with the United Nations and everything to do with the Western companies and governments that were benefiting, one way or another, from the Iraqi sanctions. More to the point, U.N. Security

Council members, including the United States, turned a blind eye to allegations of corruption while it was going on, and they may have even used it to benefit U.S. allies in the region. Volcker has said that he has found more openness and willingness to share documents about these issues in the United Nations than in some corners of the U.S. government.

It is also true, however, that the oil-for-food scandal should provide a lesson for those who continue to believe that

the United Nations can or should play a larger political role than it does today.

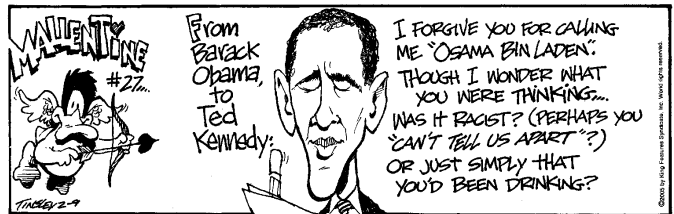
The U.N. serves many useful and necessary functions, including the coordination of international relief. Peacekeeping troops flying the U.N. flag can help monitor cease-fires in regions where there is a genuine peace to keep. But this is an organization that is severely limited in its capacity to manage complex financial and political programs, both by its necessarily politicized hiring practices and by its lack of

funds. It is not an organization that can operate well in war zones such as Bosnia or Congo, or in deeply corrupt countries such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq.

The U.N. oil-for-food report should not be used as yet another excuse for U.N.-bashing by citizens of countries whose governments behaved at least as badly in pre-war Iraq. At the same time, it should force those in this country and around the world who believe that international organizations will soon take the place of nation-states to think twice.

Mallard Fillmore

BY BRUCE TINSLEY



Junk food in school

KY FRANKFORT — A House committee approved legislation to get rid of junk food and reduce soft drink consumption in Kentucky schools. Potato chips and candy bars would be removed from school vending machines if the measure becomes law, while soft drinks would be off limits for elementary school students. Older students could have soft drinks but also would be offered water, fruit juices and milk as healthy alternatives.

Bad blueberry year

ME BANGOR — Maine's 2004 blueberry harvest was the state's worst in more than a decade. Growers harvested 46 million pounds last year, the smallest crop since 1991, according to the New England Agricultural Statistics Service. The poor showing is blamed on last year's cold winter and berry disease brought on by a wet spring.

Cell phones in prison

AR LITTLE ROCK — Arkansas legislators are considering a plan to keep cell phones out of state and local prisons. Corrections officials see the spread of cell phones as a threat to security. The bill would make it a felony to give a cell phone to anyone serving time or being held pending trial.

Same name dispute

NC LILLINGTON — Retired judge Robert B. Morgan often gets mistaken for a former U.S. senator with the same name. But he still thinks he should get to keep \$18,000 sent to the wrong man.

Harnett County officials mailed an \$18,042 check to the retired judge in April 2003. Now, they want the money back because it was supposed to go to former Sen. Robert B. Morgan.

Judge Morgan, 89, said he doesn't believe he should have to return the money. "It's been two years. I spent it and paid taxes on it," he said.

"They made the mistake, I didn't. If I make a mistake, I don't expect anyone else to pay for it," the judge said.

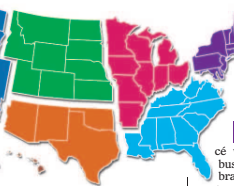
The \$18,000 was for a sewer line easement through the senator's property. Judge Morgan, who said the check had his own address, thought the money was for a water line easement on his property.

Homemade bombs go off

KS WICHITA — A 17-year-old student has been charged with making homemade bombs that exploded outside the homes of two teachers.

Authorities believe Marcus Curran also set off explosives outside the home of a school secretary and on a high school football field. No one was hurt in the blasts.

Curran was arrested at Nickerson High School in south-central Kansas taken to a juvenile detention center on five counts of arson and two counts of attempted arson. A hearing was scheduled to determine if he is charged as a ju-



AMERICAN ROUNDUP

venile or adult.

Five of the bombs exploded, two were found unexploded in mailboxes and three others were duds, Reno County Sheriff Randy Henderson said.

The five devices that exploded were powerful enough to destroy mailboxes, and one shattered the windshield of a car owned by one of the teachers, the sheriff said.

Officials reported the first explosion Jan. 16.

Reed to run for office

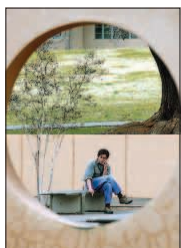
GA ATLANTA — Ralph Reed, former Christian Coalition director and President Bush's southeast regional chairman in 2004, filed paperwork allowing him to make a bid for lieutenant governor next year.

Candidates cannot accept money for campaigns until they have registered a committee, which Reed did in his filing.

From 1989 to 1997, Reed was executive director of the Christian Coalition, the organization formed by evangelist Pat Robertson. He was credited with being the major force behind the organization's fund-raising success.

Reed, 43, headed the Georgia Republican Party from 2002 to 2003, a period in which Republicans elected their first governor since Reconstruction and took control of the state Senate. The party also now controls the state House of Representatives.

The lieutenant governor's office



Break in a circle

Geology graduate student **Giovanni Romero** takes a break from his work and talks on a cell phone in front of **Breland Hall** at **New Mexico State University** in **Las Cruces, N.M.**

likely will be vacant in 2006.

The incumbent, Democrat Mark Taylor, is expected to challenge Gov. Sonny Perdue.

Street shooting

NY NEW YORK — A woman and her fiancé were gunned down on a busy Manhattan street in a brazen shooting that investigators believe was committed by the woman's ex-husband, who then turned the gun on himself.

Inessa Ivanov, 39, was killed and John Turco, 56, was critically wounded in the shooting at Madison Avenue and 57th Street, police said. The area is known for its posh shopping, including nearby stores Hermes, Burberry and Chanel.

Vadim Ivanov, 43, the alleged gunman, was found nearby, mortally wounded with a pistol in his lap and binoculars police believe were used to track the victims, police said.

Home eviction death

NC WINSTON-SALEM — A man who lost his home in a foreclosure sale was convicted of killing his home's new owner as he was about to be evicted.

Bobby Leon Griffin, 60, was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole after he was convicted of murder and other charges.

Frank Lama, who bought the foreclosed house, wanted Griffin to stay in it as a tenant and sign a lease. Witnesses testified that Griffin missed an appointment to sign a rental agreement, stopped receiving phone calls and did not make any rent payments.

In June 2003, months after the home changed hands, Lama went there with a Forsyth County Sheriff's deputy to evict Griffin. That's when Lama shot Griffin.

Man's trial date set

NY SYRACUSE — A man accused of killing his girlfriend in 1990 and keeping her decomposing body in a rented storage facility for 14 years will go on trial in April.

Onondaga County Judge Anthony Aloisi set an April 4 trial date for accused killer George Geddes Jr. after ruling Geddes' admissions to police could be used as evidence.

Geddes, 53, of Syracuse, was arrested April 1 after police found the wrapped, decomposed body of his former girlfriend, Margaret "Peggy" Reome. The body of the mother of three was discovered in a trunk inside a unit at a self-storage facility in the Syracuse suburb of Clay. An autopsy determined she died from severe trauma to the head.

Cable work completed

CT HARTFORD — The Cross Sound Cable Co. completed work to rebury sections of its cable along the Long Island Sound seabed.

The 330-megawatt cable between Connecticut and Long Island, N.Y., was activated in June, but power was shut off for several months while the company worked to rebury sections that did not meet the depth requirements.



Monster boot breaks record A worker walks in front of a giant leather boot at Red Wing Shoes in Red Wing, Minn. Using ladders, cranes and special rigging, company employees and retirees have built a supersized "638-D" replica of the company's classic work boot No. 877. The boot stands 16 feet tall and is 20 feet long. The shoelace is 104 feet long. The Guinness Book of Records recognized the boot as the world's largest shoe.



Lion baiting Toby Lee, 6, of De Pere, Wis., sticks his tongue out during a "Lion Dance" at a Chinese New Year Celebration inside Rose Hall at University of Wisconsin-Green Bay.



It's a toss up From left, Nicholas Flair, Cindy Marvell and Carter Brown perform a scene from "Lazer Vaudeville," which begins preview performances Feb. 16 at off-Broadway's John Houseman Theater in New York. The show opens March 9.



Flowers in the sand Amet Prasad, left, and others place flowers in the sand to honor the victims of Alaska Airlines flight 261 during a fifth anniversary memorial of the crash in Port Hueneme, Calif. Prasad lost his brother, Anjesh Prasad, and cousins Avenesh Deo and Amit Deo.



Strollin' with mom Tara DeVido and her 11-month-old daughter, Anna, take a walk around their Anderson, S.C., neighborhood.



Snow snooze Christine Donahoe, a freshman at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, rests while enjoying the 40 degree temperatures on the UW campus.

Herring worries

CA SAN FRANCISCO — Scientists are worried about the health of the San Francisco Bay's herring population. Fishermen also have found it increasingly difficult to earn a living in the bay's last significant commercial fishery, but argue the herring population is healthy and state restrictions are the cause of their woes.

"Many fishermen have already quit," said Ernie Koepf, 53, a commercial fisherman who heads the California Herring Association.

State biologists cite a number of reasons for so few herring being landed this season, including fewer boats, smaller spawnings and undersized fish that are off limits. They say they are hopeful more schools will come to the bay during the remainder of the season.

Ski instructor dies

VT RICHMOND — Virginia Doris Cochran, who taught more than 10,000 children to ski, has died. She was 76. Cochran started the Cochran Ski Area in Richmond with her husband, Mickey, in 1961, and taught there for more than 40 years. Daughter Barbara Ann won the Olympic gold medal in slalom in Sapporo, Japan, in 1972 and daughter Marilyn was the first American to win a World Cup in the giant slalom in 1969.

Hold the salt

FL TAMPA — Tampa Bay Water says it's ready to crank up its troubled desalination plant again. The plant will run through spring as experts search for undetected problems, then go off-line until late next year for \$29 million in repairs. The main problem is that salt filters clog too quickly. The pioneering plant has been idle for a year except for producing water one week each month to maintain the machinery.

Checking IDs

WI MILWAUKEE — A new policy requires cashiers at Roundy's grocery stores to check the identification of everyone buying cigarettes or alcohol, whether they look 21 or 91. The company says it started its "We Card Because We Care" program to prevent underage drinking and tobacco use and help local law enforcement. Roundy's owns 77 stores in Wisconsin, nearly all of which are Pick 'N Save or Cops.

Tax amnesty program

CA SACRAMENTO — Industry try groups are pushing to scale back a tax amnesty program designed to raise millions of dollars in unpaid taxes from Californians who cheated on their returns.

Corporations and anti-tax groups worry the two-month amnesty, which ends March 31, could impose steep penalties on taxpayers who have legitimate reasons not to participate. Tax officials estimate the program could raise \$280 million in new revenues and another \$300 million in future taxes.

DNA case backlog

IL SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois State Police said its backlog of criminal DNA cases was nearly wiped clean last year.

Extra funding to hire more scientists

helped the state crime lab cut its DNA backlog from more than 1,100 cases to 153 cases at the end of 2004.

Sex offender neighbor

AR SPRINGDALE — A developer who claims sales in a subdivision stopped because of a sex offender and his wife bought a home has sued the couple and the real estate company that arranged the purchase.

NGT Rental filed the \$2 million lawsuit against Randall Dee Collins and his wife, as well as the real estate company that arranged their new home purchase.

Randall Collins, 39, was convicted of molesting young girls and is listed on the Arkansas Crime Information Center Web site.

According to the lawsuit, his wife hired a real estate company to sell her old home, saying she had married a sex offender and that her home was too close to a school.

A day after the couple bought a home in a new subdivision, the police department distributed fliers detailing Collins' case.

The lawsuit alleges Collins called the developer and offered to move for \$250,000, "for he would stay there and kill their subdivision."

Cleaning the river

OR SALEM — Some legislators and Gov. Ted Kulongoski are launching a campaign to clean up the Willamette River. For years, the 187-mile river has benefited farms and cities alike. But heavy use and population growth have polluted the river with heavy metals, pesticides, waste and chlorinated water. The governor has called for cleaning an abandoned mine that leaches mercury into the river.

Steroids in school

TX DALLAS — Texas high school students searching for athletic fame or a chiseled physique are easily obtaining and using steroids, and many coaches are looking the other way, according to a four-month investigation by The Dallas Morning News. Some coaches conceded that the lack of testing programs and legal concerns made them hesitant to confront an athlete or confide in a parent.

Woman attacked twice

VT BRATTLEBORO — A man was ordered held without bail after he was charged with assaulting a woman twice in less than six hours.

Torren Boyd, 23, of Brattleboro allegedly assaulted the woman shortly before 11 p.m. on Thursday and then again shortly before 5 a.m. the next day, according to the Brattleboro Police Department.

Boyd was first arrested at 11 p.m. Thursday, according to police, and charged with first-degree aggravated domestic assault and violation of his conditions of release on a previous unrelated charge.

A few hours later, the alleged victim told police that Boyd had assaulted her again.

When Boyd was arrested on the Friday morning and charged with his second violation of conditions of release, he was found to have 25.5 grams of crack cocaine on him, police said.

Stories and photos from wire services

FACES

Operation Make 'em Laugh

Former Marine who served in Desert Storm tours Iraq to entertain troops

BY LISA FERGUSON
Las Vegas Sun

Most comics will likely never experience the sort of bombing that James P. Connolly has endured in his career.

A former Marine Corps officer, Connolly was in Kuwait during the early 1990s, serving in Operation Desert Storm. More than a decade had passed when he returned to the region last fall, as part of the "Comics on Duty World Tour," to entertain U.S. troops fighting in Iraq.

"It was like going back and reliving a part of my life that I never thought I'd get to relive," he said. "It felt like the Marine Corps, and it felt like wartime, but nobody asked me to do anything remotely manly or testostosterone-driven."

His orders this time around were to boost soldiers' morale.

"Everyone was talking about when they were due to rotate home, and they just wanted to talk to you. ... It was more of a human thing than a war-torn thing," Connolly said. "What we got to experience was everyone taking a break from the war scenario to spend some time with us and laugh, and that's just like going into a comedy club when people take a break from their lives."

As part of the "bare-bones tour," Connolly and his fellow comedians — who slept in tents alongside the troops and used outdoor latrines — staged shows throughout Iraq, including in the embattled cities of Najaf and Fallujah.

"The thing about Fallujah was that everywhere in Iraq, people would say '... As long as you don't go to Fallujah' "

— a group of Army soldiers among them, he recalls: "They asked, 'Where are you off to next?' and we said, 'Well, we're headed to Fallujah,' and (from) these 250 soldiers, this collective sigh went, 'Oh.' " Despite others' concerns about the comics' safety, Connolly insists he wasn't worried.

"I always tell them, 'First of all, I'm very confident that we'll be protected by our armed men and women of the United States government.' And, I said, 'Secondly, I carry something in my pocket that the Marine Corps gave me years ago (to use) in just such a crisis: It's a copy of my dis-

charge papers.' " Meanwhile, two Marines were assigned to serve as the performers' security detachment throughout Iraq.

year and a half — really appreciate the new boots now," he recalls. "So, I had them in my closet for like a decade and I never used them."

Connolly — who was stationed at California's Camp Pendleton while serving from 1988 through 1992 — credits the military for helping him uncover his comedic talents.

"I think I'm the only comedian whose career started with a direct order from his colonel," he boasts, explaining how he penned some one-liners the colonel used to riff on other officers during a roast event.

Upon retiring from the Marines, the Harvard grad started a short-lived career as a DJ/karaoke host in San Diego before relocating 10 years ago to Los Angeles, where he took a comedy class and hit the open-mike circuit with an act built on his hipster persona.

"I talk about the one thing I know better than anything else: me," he jokes.

Having been a finalist at several comedy festivals around the country, in 2002 he was crowned Grand Champion on "Next Big Star," a TV talent show hosted by Ed McMahon.

He also hosted the VH1 game show "Movie Obsessions," and recorded a CD, "Pure Polyester," in 2004.

"Most people that know me as a comedian have no clue that I was in the Marine Corps," he says. "People that were in the Marine Corps might be shocked to find out that I ended up being a stand-up comic."

As for the prospects of making a return trip to Iraq to entertain the troops again, Connolly says, "Let's put it this way, it will be very hard to say no."



Photos courtesy of James P. Connolly

Left: Connolly stands in front of the sign for Camp Fallujah, Iraq, during his "Comics on Duty World Tour." **Above:** Connolly uses one-liners and personal experience to get laughs during his routines.

Reigning 'Idol' defends her song

Reigning American Idol Fantasia Barrino said one song on her new CD, "Free Yourself," is dedicated to young mothers who struggle to support themselves and their children — just as she does.

Her "Baby Mama" track has elicited some criticism as endorsing children out of wedlock, but Barrino, 20, said she isn't promoting teenage motherhood.

Barrino has a 3-year-old daughter named Zion. She said she isn't ashamed of being a teenage mother, but "if I could have waited, I would have."

She will be a co-host of the Soul Train Awards on Feb. 28, and she is nominated for an NAACP Image Award as outstanding female artist.

Hemingway's sensitive manuscript

The macho hunter image of Ernest Hemingway is replaced by a picture of the author as a confident and happy man in one of his last manuscripts, to be published this fall.

Written while Hemingway was on safari in Kenya from

late 1953 to early 1954, "Under Kilimanjaro" is lighter and more comedic than the author's other work, said coeditor Robert Lewis, a Hemingway scholar at the University of North Dakota.

"Without this book, I think people would tend to stereotype Hemingway as they have in the past, as the macho man, the man of blood sports. ... That man is completely absent from this book," Lewis said.

The unabridged novel, published by Kent State University Press, in Kent, Ohio, is expected in bookstores in September.

Dr. Laura's son joins Special Forces

Tough talking radio host Dr. Laura Schlessinger's 19-year-old son will join the U.S. Special Forces later this year — an endeavor that could take him to Iraq.

Schlessinger, famous for doling out conservative advice on her nationally syndicated call-in show, told about 300 people at a 425th Civil Affairs Battalion event on Saturday that she wasn't too worried about her son, Derek Bishop.

"I brought my son up to be a warrior," she said from Santa Barbara, Calif. "I feel sorry for the mothers of

the bad guys. And I just have a good feeling."

Bishop, who enlisted last year, joined his mother on stage and told the audience including U.S. Army reservists that he resents how Americans criticize the war without recognizing the sacrifices soldiers make.

Spike Lee: Find a career you love

Filmmaker Spike Lee told a crowd of college students that they should try to find a career that will make them happy, not necessarily one that will make them rich.

"Hopefully, you'll be able to find a career path that you love and be able to make a living out of that," Lee told about 1,000 Miami University students in Oxford, Ohio.

He urged students to use their college years to discover what they would enjoy doing during their lives. "You do not want to be sitting 20 years from now when you dread waking up in the morning to go to a job that you hate," Lee said.

Lee's credits include "School Daze," "Do the Right Thing," "Jungle Fever," and "Malcolm X."

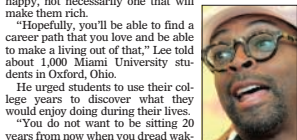
Stories and photos from The Associated Press



Barrino



Schlessinger



Lee

YOUR MONEY

Internet scams

FCC says complaints targeting online auction sites nearly double

BY GENARO C. ARMAS

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Americans are increasingly turning to Internet auction sites to buy and sell goods from around the world, and a growing number of people may be getting a raw deal online.

The number of complaints filed with the Federal Trade Commission over Internet auctions has nearly doubled from 51,000 in 2002 to more than 98,000 last year, the agency said Tuesday in its annual report on consumer fraud and identity-theft complaints.

The online complaints cover everything from the failure of sellers to deliver goods or services to consumers claiming their purchases weren't worth the price they paid.

Complaints for all types of fraud have grown since 2002, according to the FTC report. Internet auction grievances comprised 13 percent of the 403,000 total fraud complaints in 2002; in 2004, it made up 16 percent of the 635,000 grievances.

Americans are becoming more wary of potential scams, heeding the advice of public awareness campaigns, said Betsy Broder, a lawyer with the FTC's consumer protection bureau.

"We like to think that people are more savvy about shopping online. They've learned to take precautions that they said that's on the Internet doesn't mean it's legitimate," Broder said.

The only other category in which more complaints were filed in 2004 was identity theft—39 percent, or more than 246,000 of the total complaints, down slightly from 40 percent in 2002. It was the fifth straight year that identity theft topped the list of consumer concerns.

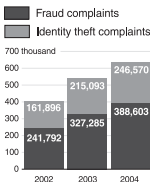
Identity theft involves stealing someone's personal information for financial gain. The most common cases involve credit cards, followed by telephone or utility, bank and workplace fraud.

Consumers and businesses appear to be taking more caution in protecting credit card information, Broder said. In 2004, 17 percent of identity theft complaints involved someone trying to use a victim's personal information to open a credit account, down from 24 percent in 2002.

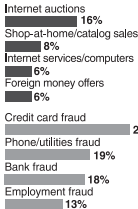
According to the FTC, the third most common complaint involved shop-at-home or catalog sales, accounting for 8 percent of grievances in 2004. It was followed by complaints about Internet-related service issues (6 percent), such as undisclosed Web site charges and spyware, and foreign money offers (6 percent).

Fraud, identity theft complaints on rise

Consumers reported 635,173 complaints of fraud and identity theft in 2004, according to government statistics.



Leading complaint categories, 2004



SOURCE: Federal Trade Commission, AP

Printer is key to 'print to file' tool

Q I recently got a new notebook computer and could definitely use the "print to file" feature if I could only get it to work. When connected to the printer, the computer hangs up. When connected, it creates a file that will not print. In the DOS days, I used to have a freeware TSR that was very handy for this type of purpose.

Roger Kemps
Here is that drill, and where you went wrong: To get Windows to print text files to special print files in the PRN format for later use, you need to add a printer called Generic. So Click on Start and then Control Panel and open the Printers and Fax icon.

Jim Coates
Add a Printer in the menu at the left. Select Local Printer in the next prompt and clear the button that asks if you want Windows to look for a plug-and-play printer.

Next comes the key step of designating a printer port. This likely is at the port of your problem. Make sure you do not use the recommended default, which is LPT1, but rather scroll down the list of ports to USB001, which is the port most printers now use. In the box that comes up next showing your printer model, scroll down to Generic.

Now click Do Not Share This Printer and then say No when asked to print a test page. Now you can open a document that is prepared in text mode and click File/Print and then select Print. This will create a file in the DOS-type PRN format for later printing simply by giving it a click.

Q In a recent column, you made a reference to scanning equipment that can be used to scan photographic slides. Are there specific scanner models or features/references—specifications that I should look to as sure that I get good results? —Paul Sundberg

A Here is a great opportunity to help folks do the kind of shopping you need to do using the Google search engine. Mr. S. So go to www.google.com and use the search term "photo scanners" to get started.

The results will have at the top of the page— and down the side— offerings paid for by the biggest companies in the photo-scanner market, such as Hewlett-Packard, Epson and Canon.

When I tested this for you the HP ad was in first place and the search hit an excellent choice in the HP ScanJet 4070. Photosmart scanner. It comes with a useful feature called a photo door that lets users feed

filmstrips into a slot. Like other photo scanners in the line, the device comes with software that automatically corrects things like faded colors, minor blemishes and scratches. The price I found on Google was \$130, which I consider low.

I've tested a couple of these "PhotoSmart" scanners and was pleased— although I've enjoyed equally good results from Epson and Canon. My take on the experience is that they all offer pretty much equal functionality for hobby use and so price probably is the best criterion.

As a way to get down and dirty about price, use a Google feature called Google to find products by price. Go to <http://www.google.com> and click on the "Tools" link. On the left of the resulting display is a command to sort the results by price, starting either at the low or high end. Pick the low, of course, and you will find pretty much all the available photo scanners sold over the Web.

Contact Jim Coates via e-mail at jcoates@tribune.com or via snail mail at the Chicago Tribune, Room 400, 435 N. Michigan Ave., Chicago IL 60611. Questions can be answered only through this column. Ask Jim at chicago@tribune.com/askjim.

MONDAY'S MARKET SUMMARY

High 52-week Low			
Most Active	Last	Net	% YTD
10,610.41	1,708.41	Down Jones Industrials	10,715.70
3,622.98	2,743.46	Down Jones Transportation	3,662.13
55.27	259.86	Down Dow Utilities	55.27
7,773.13	6,211.33	NYSE Composite	7,773.13
1,470.78	1,158.74	NYSE Index	1,470.78
2,116.16	1,750.82	Nasdaq Composite	2,116.16
1,217.00	1,060.72	S&P 500	1,217.00
666.29	546.29	S&P MidCap	666.29
656.11	515.90	Russell 2000	656.11
12,246.52	10,358.52	10 Wilshire 2000	12,246.52

NYSE			
Most Active (\$1 or more)	Last	Net	% YTD
Most Active	47,567	1.29	+0.27
Overseas	42,102	+4.11	+0.98
Overseas	33,799	50.41	+1.51
Overseas	13,799	50.41	+1.51
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EXCHANGE RATES

Military rates		\$1 = 39.90
Dollar buys	0.7638	
British pound	1.6190	
Japanese yen (Feb. 10)	122.00	
South Korean won (Feb. 10)	1,000.00	
Commercial rates		
Bahrayn (Dinar)	0.71759	
British pound	1.2596	
Canada (Dollar)	0.550	
Denmark (Krone)	0.133	
Euro (Euro)	0.6153	
French franc	0.17170	
Hong Kong (Dollar)	0.7995	
Hungary (Forint)	16.48	
Iceland (Krona)	61.93	
Israel (Sheqel)	1.8358	
Japan (Yen)	104.84	
Kuwait (Dinar)	0.2010	
Norway (Krone)	0.517	
Philippines (Peso)	0.358	
Saudi Arabia (Riyal)	0.267	
Singapore (Dollar)	0.715	
South Korea (Won)	1,000.20	
Sri Lanka (Rupee)	1.19	
Switzerland (Franc)	0.715	
Thailand (Baht)	0.353	
Turkey (Lira)	0.0004	

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Points and Sensibility

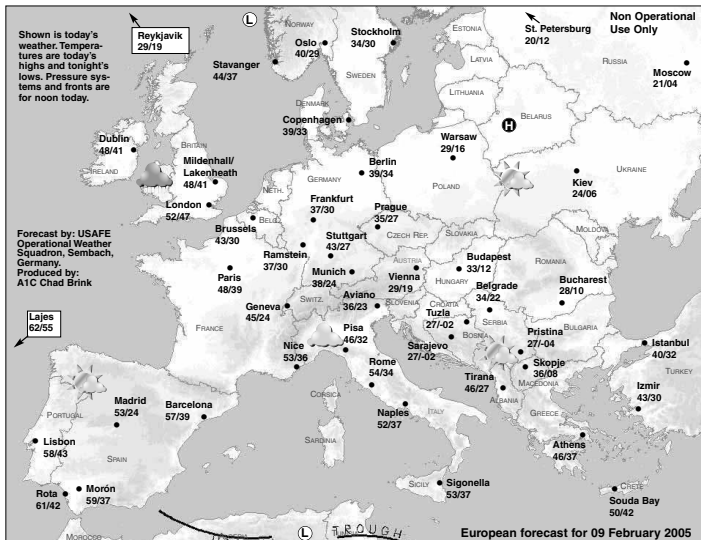
Money tip of the day

Loyalty key on reward deals

MarketWatch
NEW YORK — Reward cards allow you to earn redeemable rebates or points for purchases you make. These aren't typical store-sponsored credit cards. Reward programs are offered by major credit-card companies and can be used anywhere.

Potential rewards include airline tickets, car rebates, cash back and contributions to a college savings plan. With so many choices, consumers are fickle. So reports Maritz Loyalty Marketing, which found in a survey of loyalty program users that 20 percent had switched cards because they didn't like their options for redeeming points. While getting something back for your purchases may sound like good, your research.

Reward cards typically have an APR about 4 percentage points higher than other credit cards — around 14 to 16 percent. With such high interest charges, a rewards card makes sense if you plan to pay the balance each month. To find a program that works for you, visit www.creditcards.com, or www.creditcardreview.com.



EUROPEAN FORECAST

Benelux: Mostly cloudy with rainshowers. Highs in the lower to mid 40s. Thursday lows in the lower to upper

Britain, Ireland: Cloudy with isolated rainshowers. Highs in the upper 40s to lower 50s. Thursday lows in the

Croatia and Bosnia: Partly cloudy with dense fog overnight. Highs in the upper 20s. Thursday lows in the negative single digits.

France: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 40s to lower 50s. Thursday lows in the mid to upper 30s.

Northern Germany: Partly cloudy with isolated snowshowers. Highs in the upper 30s to mid 40s. Thursday lows in the lower to upper 30s.

Southern Germany: Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 30s to lower 40s. Thursday lows in the mid 20s to lower 30s.

Hungary: Sunny. Highs in the lower 30s. Thursday lows in the lower teens.

Northern Italy: Sunny. Highs in the mid 30s to mid 40s. Thursday lows in the lower 20s to lower 30s.

Southern Italy: Partly to mostly cloudy. Highs in the lower to mid 50s. Thursday lows in the mid 30s to lower 40s.

Kosovo: Partly cloudy with dense fog overnight. Highs in the mid to upper 20s. Thursday lows in the negative single digits.

Norway: Cloudy with rain and snow-showers. Highs in the lower to mid 40s. Thursday lows in the upper 20s to upper 30s.

Portugal, Spain: Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s to lower 60s. Thursday lows in the mid 20s inland, and upper 30s to lower 40s in coastal regions.

Turkey: Partly cloudy with isolated rain and snowshowers. Highs in the lower 30s inland, and lower 40s to lower 50s in coastal regions. Thursday lows in the mid teens inland, and lower 30s in coastal region.

For current weather watches, warnings, and 5-day forecasts go to the USAF Operational Weather Squadron home page at:
<https://ows.sembach.af.mil>
<http://ows.public.sembach.af.mil>

KEY: Sunny Pt. Cludy Mostly cludy Cloudy Shower Tstorm Rain Rain/snow Snow

Cold frnt. Warm frnt. TROUGH Occluded fr. Steady front

Low High

AFRICA

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Cape Town	80	61	Mogadishu	88	74
Dakar	73	63	Nairobi	82	56
Freetown	89	75	Rabat	62	45

THE WORLD

	HI	LO		HI	LO
Amsterdam	45	39	Manila	84	74
Bahrain	66	45	Mexico City	74	48
Beijing	34	16	Montreal	35	21
Beirut	53	42	Riyadh	62	42
Bermuda	67	59	Rio de Jan	82	71
Caracas	84	74	Seoul	39	13
Helsinki	27	24	Sofia	29	08
Hong Kong	71	59	Sydney	84	64
Ishom	58	43	Tyran	53	37

TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

	HI	LO	OK	
Alabama, Tex.	48	40	58	Cleveland
Alaska, Ohio	35	25	50	Colorado Springs
Albany, N.Y.	38	23	53	Columbia, S.C.
Albany, N.J.	38	23	53	Columbus, Ohio
Albuquerque, N.M.	46	32	58	Cincinnati, Ohio
Albion, Pa.	46	32	58	Concord, N.H.
Albion, N.Y.	46	32	58	Concord, Mass.
Anchorage	26	16	41	Dallas-Ft. Worth
Anchorage, Alaska	26	16	41	Dallas, Texas
Atlanta, Ga.	61	39	70	Daytona Beach
Atlanta, Ga.	61	39	70	Dayton, Ohio
Baltimore	48	34	59	Denver
Baltimore, Md.	48	34	59	Detroit
Birmingham	48	34	59	Dubuque, Iowa
Birmingham, Ala.	48	34	59	El Paso
Bismarck	56	38	64	Elkton
Boston	50	34	62	Elkhart
Boston, Mass.	50	34	62	Evansville
Boulder	46	33	59	Fairbanks
Brighton	46	33	59	Fargo
Brighton, Colo.	46	33	59	Flagstaff
Burlington, Vt.	33	21	47	Flint
Burlington, N.C.	33	21	47	Fort Collins
Carbondale, Ill.	38	24	51	Fort Worth
Charleston, S.C.	68	49	84	Fresno
Charleston, S.C.	68	49	84	Fresno, Calif.
Charlotte, N.C.	63	43	78	Grand Junction
Chicago	58	38	68	Grand Rapids
Chicago, Ill.	58	38	68	Great Falls
Cheyenne	37	17	51	Green Bay
Chicago	28	18	50	Greenville, N.C.

MIDWEST

SUN & MOON

	Today	Tomorrow
Sunrise (Baghdad)	6:53AM	6:52AM
Sunrise (Frankfurt)	7:47AM	7:45AM
Sunset (Baghdad)	5:43PM	5:44PM
Sunset (Frankfurt)	5:34PM	5:36PM

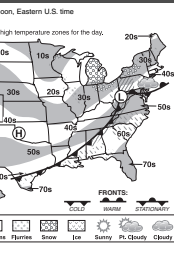


TODAY'S STATESIDE OUTLOOK

25	Row	Hartung	43	33	Row
17	PoCly	Hartung	49	30	Row
44	Row	Helena	38	19	Cr
27	Row	Houston	62	41	Cr
27	Row	Houston	64	61	Cr
04	Cr	Hurtville	56	34	Row
03	Cr	Hurtville	56	34	Row
33	Cr	Jacksonville	60	35	Row
56	Cr	Jacksonville	60	35	Row
56	Cr	Jacksonville	60	35	Row
19	PoCly	Kansas City	38	37	Row
19	PoCly	Kansas City	38	37	Row
21	Row	Kansas City	38	37	Row
21	Row	Kansas City	38	37	Row
40	PoCly	Las Vegas	62	42	Cr
27	Row	Las Vegas	62	42	Cr
27	Row	Las Vegas	62	42	Cr
03	Cr	Lincoln	24	14	PoCly
03	Cr	Lincoln	24	14	PoCly
5	Cr	Los Angeles	49	49	PoCly
6	Cr	Louisville	44	28	Cr
18	Row	Madison	65	44	Row
18	Row	Madison	65	44	Row
22	Row	Madison	54	33	PoCly
42	PoCly	Memphis	50	33	Cr
42	PoCly	Memphis	50	33	Cr
18	Cr	Midland-Odessa	51	35	Cr
18	Cr	Midland-Odessa	51	35	Cr
28	Cr	Midland-Odessa	51	35	Cr
28	Cr	Midland-Odessa	51	35	Cr
14	Row	Mobile-St Paul	69	43	Row
14	Row	Mobile-St Paul	69	43	Row

THE UNITED S

45	30	Rain	San Angelo	52	35	City
46	30	Rain	San Antonio	60	40	City
47	30	Rain	San Antonio	60	40	City
48	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
49	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
50	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
51	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
52	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
53	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
54	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
55	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
56	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
57	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
58	34	City	San Antonio	60	40	City
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Horoscope

Happy Chinese New Year, and welcome to the Year of the Rooster! This year is also called the Year of Yiyu and according to the Chinese calendar is the year 4702. The last Yiyu year was 1945, which brought the end of World War II. Use the abundant Aquarian energy to push late the end of a conflict and envision a brighter future.

TODAY'S BIRTHDAY

(February 9) Your optimism makes all things possible. Working the kinks out of your personal life, perhaps with the aid of a highly educated third party, paves the way for beautiful relationships. You'll attract abundance this spring by accepting responsibility and embracing the habits of people already at the next financial level. Love signs are Leo and Cancer.

ARIES (March 21-April 19). You're holding a space open in your life to be filled by someone yet to arrive. At this very moment, the person could be starting the journey that will eventually lead to your heart. Keep the faith.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20). The hours are filled with small, unexceptional details that mean nothing until seen in hindsight. Later, all the pieces fit together, and you'll finally have your answer to that mind-boggling question.

GEMINI (May 21-June 21). Politics heat up at work. Remember that you aim to thrive, and that's what sets you apart from the others who are merely trying to stay in the game. Everything is easy when you're coming from the right frame of mind.

CANCER (June 22-July 22). A rapid and remarkable transformation is featured. Perhaps you're finally applying the information you've been gathering for weeks, and the result is brilliant. In matters of the heart, you are offered the naked truth.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22). Stakes are higher now and continue to elevate with the growing number of people involved in your scene. Lead the team, and encourage its mem-

bers to think coherently, act together and recognize the opportunity at hand.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22). Something is going terribly right in your world. It's crucial to acknowledge this so you are inspired to continue to create more of the good thing — even if you don't know how you created it to begin with.

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 23). You're being graded and will probably react to this fact with instinctive caution. However, the less you care about how others rate you, the more likely you are to enjoy your work. Dare to make an unpopular choice.

SCORPIO (Oct. 24-Nov. 21). There's a danger of becoming too mired in the details, semantics and structures of business and not having enough fun with your process. The creative spark visits you when you let go of needing to be perfect.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21). Someone isn't telling you the whole truth, which prevents you from achieving all the success you desire. Approach opponents in a non-threatening way. Genuine curiosity drives you to the heart of the matter.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19). You could argue forever about whether or not a move was justified, but the fact remains, what's done is done. The sooner you accept the current circumstance, the sooner you'll be empowered to do something about it.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18). Usually, you're lighthearted about your friendships, but something is different now. You think hard about your partnerships and push them to be better. Your focus and inventiveness make you extraordinary.

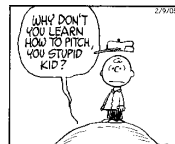
PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20). Make a study of what it takes to do better than everyone else. This requires you put any prejudice you have aside and remain as open as possible. (If you don't think you have prejudices, think again! Everyone does!)

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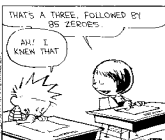
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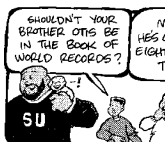
Peanuts



Calvin and Hobbes



Jump Start



Zits



Cathy



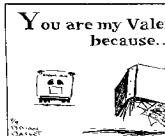
Hi and Lois



Beetle Bailey



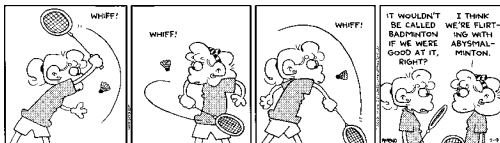
Red and Rover



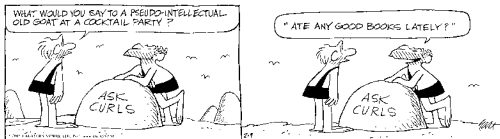
Better or Worse



Fotrot



B.C.



Baby Blues



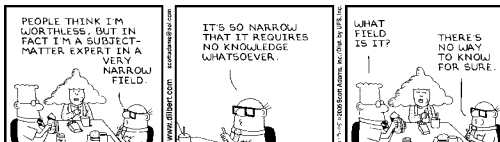
Spider Man



Blondie



Dilbert



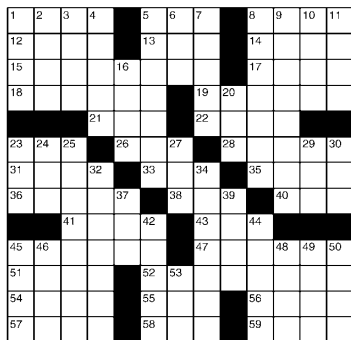
Hagar



Garfield



Eugene Sheffer Crossword



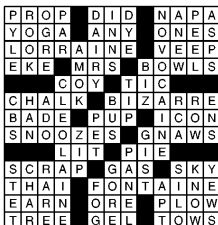
Across

- 1 Tallow
5 Spotted
8 Somewhere out there
12 Other (Sp.)
13 Falsehood
14 "The Amazing —"
15 It's within bounds
17 Exemplar of thinness
18 Postulation
19 Crown of honor
21 Placekicker's pride
22 Not barefoot
23 Vacationing
26 Contorted
28 Jacket material
31 TV dinner veggies
33 Pouch
35 "Smooth Operator" singer

Down

- 1 Too lenient
2 Beehive State
3 Where "We have met the enemy ..."
4 Pack to the future?
5 St. George and Buffy
6 Have a bug
7 The Invisible Man's author
8 Difficult
9 Truman's plan
10 Wile E.'s supplier
11 Stagger
16 Forehead
20 Oohs's mates
23 Make up your mind
24 Tina of "SNL"
25 New Jersey town
27 Verb for Popeye
29 JFK's predecessor
30 "A mouse!"
32 Treated with disdain
34 Pad
37 Needlefish
39 Incite
42 Hold in abeyance
44 Full-figured
45 Guys' partners
46 Ox of puzzlement
48 Unclear image
49 Ms. Turner
50 Sight-seers?
53 Way back when

Answer to Previous Puzzle



2-9

CRYPTOQUIP

FY J XNTJMG O BBBO FX
VUTG FG J XLZZQMUTHX.
F TZNHUG EZ IWXL VZ

TWGL - UY - LEZ - IFQQ.
Yesterday's Cryptoquip: WHEN TYPING UP A HORROR STORY, YOU MUSTN'T FORGET TO ALLOW FOR A MARGIN OF TERROR.

Today's Cryptoquip Clue: B equals P

Husband's flash fetish unwelcome

Dear Abby: My husband, "Wilmer," and I are in our mid-50s. We've been married 35 years, and for the most part we have gotten along great. However, for about the last 12 years, Wilmer has been on this kick that when we're on a road trip, he wants me to "flash" truckers. At times, he has even tried to get me to show everything.

I was raised to be modest and have told my husband repeatedly that I don't want to do it, that the mere suggestion makes me uncomfortable. He says I'm not getting any younger and I'll regret it someday. Last weekend, we were on the road again, and he wanted me to do the trucker thing. When I refused, I got the silent treatment for the rest of the trip. After we returned home, Wilmer and I were in our hot tub, and he said another trip had been "wasted" because I wouldn't cooperate.

I am not a prude. I enjoy sex

with my husband, but I'm not an exhibitionist. I have thought about talking to my pastor, but Wilmer would just say he's on my side because I believe in God and my husband is an atheist. Please help me.

I don't think our sex life needs a third party.

Dear Abby



Dear Undercover Wife: Neither do I. What your husband is suggesting could cause a fatal accident. Please remind Wilmer that indecent exposure is a crime and that he is going to have to get his kicks somewhere else.

Dear Abby: I'm 16 and a junior in high school. For the past year and a half, I have been taking ballroom dance lessons and was assigned a teenage dance partner. To make a long story short, I fell for him. It was a schoolgirl crush for a while, and I would call him daily. A few months ago, he finally

decided to date me. It didn't last long. After six weeks, we broke up. It turned out that he didn't really like me. We have sort of gone back to being friends.

Is there any way I can get over him quicker? I can't pretend he's dead or anything. How can I get the pain to stop so we can just be friends? I have to ballroom dance with someone you know doesn't reciprocate your feelings.

Dear Abby: Takes Two to Tango. The obvious answer would be to ask your teacher to assign you a different partner. However, if the two of you are dancing in competition and it's not practical, then you'll have to adjust the way you think about the young man. When you go to the dance floor, take a mental step backward. Tell yourself he is your business partner, because in a sense that's what he is. It might give you a different perspective.

Letters for this column — with your name and phone number — should be addressed to Dear Abby, P.O. Box 6940, Los Angeles CA 90069. Readers can write to Abby on the Internet at: <http://www.uepress.com/dearabby>

JUMBLE

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

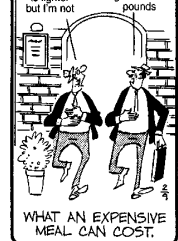
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A: A _____ OF _____

Yesterday's Jumbles: BULGY ITCHY VELVET UNLAD

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

(Answers tomorrow)

Why the operator went to work despite a heavy cold — THE "CALL TO DUTY"

Business bed antics merit a talk

Dear Annie: My husband of 30 years recently confessed that while on a business trip overseas, a young woman was sent to his room to sleep with him. Rather than turn her away, he said he felt obligated to let her in. According to him, she spent the night in the same bed, but absolutely nothing happened. He confessed because he felt guilty, but also claims it was no big deal because there was no sex or anything.

I am really upset about this. He could have sent her away, or if he felt so sorry for her, he could have slept on the floor. I believe that nothing happened, but I find it incredible that after 30 years of marriage, he'd share his bed with a strange woman and then think it doesn't merit discussion.

I really need some feedback on this.

— Disturbed Wife

Annie's Mailbox



Dear Disturbed: Your husband may have believed it would insult his business associates if he turned the woman away. However, there was no reason whatsoever for him to share his bed with her.

Of course it merits discussion. We admire your confidence in his fidelity, and think the least he can do is let you vent your hurt and disappointment, and do whatever is necessary to help you get past this.

Dear Annie: My wife, "Donna," often takes her cousin, "Nan," on trips with her. Nan can't afford to travel, so Donna pays for everything — airfare, hotel, food, etc. We are not rich. Donna simply has a soft spot for Nan.

Recently, due to a flight delay, the women received travel vouchers from the airline. Because these vouchers are given to the

traveler, not the person who purchased the ticket, Nan received her own and has decided to use it to take a trip with her husband.

Don't you think it would have been a nice gesture for Nan to offer the voucher to my wife? I plan to discuss this with Donna and suggest she be less generous in the future. Tell me what you think before I pour salt in her wound.

— Don't Walk On My Lady

Dear Don't Walk: Yes, it would have been good manners for Nan to have offered the voucher to Donna, who then most likely would have refused to take it. Still, unless these treats are cutting into your budget, please don't interfere in your wife's personal choices. She will appreciate your trust in her decisions.

Annie's Mailbox is written by Kathy Mitchell and Marcy Sugar, longtime editors of the *Los Angeles Times*. Please e-mail your questions to annie@mailbox.comcast.net, or write to: Annie's Mailbox, c/o Creators Syndicate, 5777 W. Century Blvd., Suite 700, Los Angeles CA 90045.

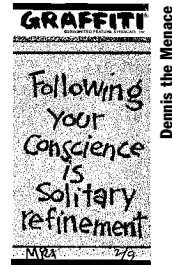
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Family Circus



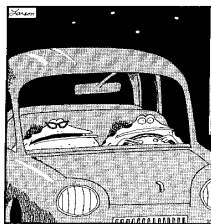
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"If one of our fishes dies we hafta pick which way to go — burial or flushing."



© Gary Larson

The Far Side



"Watch out for that tree, you idiot... And now you're on the wrong side of the road. C'mon! You're driving like you've been pruned or something."

Non Sequitur





Syracuse's Hakin Warrick drives the baseline against Connecticut's Josh Boone during the first half in Syracuse, N.Y., on Monday.

Huskies snap Syracuse's 16-game home win streak

BY JOHN KEKIS

The Associated Press

SYRACUSE, N.Y. — Jim Calhoun was beginning to have some doubts about his Connecticut Huskies after they lost three of their first seven Big East games. Now, the defending national champions are emerging as a team to be feared.

"We're young and have paid that price during the season," Calhoun said Monday night after No. 19 Connecticut, which starts a junior, three sophomores and a freshman, handed eighth-ranked Syracuse its first home loss in nearly a year.

"We're making some progress, and to make progress here against a program, coach and players, four who won a national championship, it's the biggest win we have had this year," he said.

Sophomore forward Charlie Villanueva led the way with 21 points and 10 rebounds, and Connecticut closed the game with a 9-1 run for a 74-66 victory, ending the Orange's 16-game home winning streak.

The last time Syracuse (21-3, 8-2 Big East) lost in the Carrier Dome was last Feb. 16 to Notre Dame.

Villanueva outscored Syracuse 7-5 over the final eight minutes as the Huskies (15-5, 7-3) won for the fourth time in five games.

That was a dramatic turnaround from his previous game — Calhoun said Villanueva was in tears after scoring just three points in Connecticut's win over St. John's on Saturday.

"This was a huge win for us," said Villanueva, whose reverse layup put the Huskies up for good, 67-65, with 2:47 left and sent Terrence Roberts to the Syracuse bench with his fifth foul. "For me personally, it was as huge as it gets. This was a big game in a tough place to play."

Foul trouble plagued Syracuse in the final minutes. Hakim Warrick, the team's leading scorer, was called for his fourth foul with 11:44 remaining. Just more than a minute later, center Darryl Watkins picked up his fourth, then Josh Pace and Roberts joined them. Overall, the Orange were called for 24 fouls and Warrick missed 5-40 of the second half. Connecticut was called for 15 fouls, only six in the second half.

"I feel like just screaming and beating everybody up. We let one slip away," said junior guard Gerry McNamara, who was hounded relentlessly by the Connecticut defense and scored just nine points, 10 below his average in conference play.

"I looked at the scoreboard once and our five players on the court had 17 fouls," he said. "It's tough to play aggressive."

Freshman Rudy Gay added 18 points for Connecticut, and Marcus Williams had nine points and six assists.

Warrick had 16 points, but only three in the second half. Pace finished with 14, and Roberts had 12.

The game was a matchup of the last two national champions and matched two of the winningest coaches in the sport's history.

Calhoun has 695 victories, two behind Jim Boeheim.

When Warrick went to the bench after picking up his fourth foul, Syracuse was ahead 53-52. The Orange built the lead to 61-56 when McNamara drove the lane and fed Watkins for a thunderous, two-handed dunk with 8:10 left.

Villanueva then scored the first three points of a 9-0 run that put the Huskies in command. Williams drove the lane and scored over Watkins to put Connecticut up 63-61 with 5:24 left, and Villanueva capped the spurt a minute later with a flip off the backboard with Watkins defending again.

Billy Edelin hit a jumper for Syracuse 28 seconds later and Pace was credited with a basket on a goaltending call to tie it at 65 with 3:15 left.

But Syracuse, which lost for the second time in three games, came up empty on its next five possessions as Pace and Edelin, key members of the 2003 championship team, committed costly turnovers with errant passes.

"We tried to get the ball to Hak at the end of the game," Boeheim said. "But our guys were nervous trying to go to the post, and that was the ballgame. We have been very good down the stretch, but every game down the stretch you're not always going to make the right plays. I thought we played as hard as we played all year."

Cowboys build confidence with 11 over Sooners

The Associated Press

STILLWATER, Okla. — Oklahoma State is feeling confident again.

JamesOn Curry and Joey Graham scored 22 points each, and the 10th-ranked Cowboys beat No. 16 Oklahoma 79-67 on Monday night for their fourth straight victory.

"I think we're at the point now where we can start running up and down on teams," Graham said.

The Cowboys (18-3, 8-2 Big 12), who won 13 of their first 14, stumbled briefly with two losses in their next three. But a big win against the Sooners showed that Oklahoma State is again on track.

"I think those first two losses were a wake-up call for us," Graham said. "It was just a matter for us where we were just starting clicking and running."

Curry sparked an 11-2 surge with an offensive rebound put-back and a long jumper from just inside the three-point line. Lucas followed with a fast-break layup, Graham hit a baseline jumper and Lucas capped it with a three-pointer from the right wing



to push the lead to 48-39 with 15½ minutes left.

Another three by Curry stretched it to 53-43, and after an offensive foul call against Oklahoma's Taj Gray, Curry walked toward the student section pointing to his ear for the already noisy crowd in a sold-out Gallagher-Iba Arena to raise the volume even more.

Back-to-back baskets by Kevin Bookout and Johnnie Gilbert brought Oklahoma (17-5, 6-3) within four at 60-56, but the Cowboys had an answer: Lucas hit a three-pointer off an inbound play and Stephen Graham got the crowd back involved with a two-handed jam off his brother's alley-oop pass.

Joey Graham added a right-handed in the lane, and pushed the lead to 73-59 with just under three minutes left by driving the baseline for a layup. After that, the Cowboys were able to drain the clock as the Sooners didn't try to foul.

The Cowboys' winning streak started after a loss to Oklahoma two weeks ago in which Curry had only two points and four fouls in 17 minutes. He made his first career start in the Cowboys' next contest, and the move has made a difference. In four starts, Curry is averaging 16.5 points. His 22 points tied a career high.

"I let me know some of my work's been paying off," Curry said. "I've been working hard every day, and they're noticing what I do."

No. 15 Utah 57, UNLV 53: At Las Vegas, Bryant Markerson scored 19 points and Utah overcame an off night by Andrew Bogut to extend its winning streak to 15 games.

The Utes (20-3, 8-0 Mountain West) only led by one with less than a minute to play but closed the game by making four of six foul shots.

The Rebels (9-11, 2-6) mounted a spirited comeback late in the second half, going on an 11-2 run that was capped by Louis Amundson's dunk to cut the deficit to 52-48 with 4:07 left.

Michael Umeh then converted

a three-point play off a turnover with 2:15 remaining to trim the margin to one, but Utah hung on from there.

Bogut finished with 14 points, six below his average. The 7-foot sophomore from Australia was limited to four rebounds.

Odyssey Blankson led UNLV with 18 points.

No. 22 Villanova 67, Saint Joseph's 52: At Philadelphia, Jason Fraser had 14 points and 14 rebounds, and Villanova withstood a second-half rally by Saint Joseph's.

With the sweltering Palestine rocking in the latest meeting between these local rivals, the crowd at the famed home of the Big 5 saw another wild one in the series' 84-year history.

Villanova (14-5) used a full-court press, hustling guard play and the best game of the season from the oft-injured Fraser to take a 21-point lead midway through the second half. The Wildcats then hung on for their fifth win in six games.

Curtis Sumpter scored 15 points for Villanova.

Pat Carroll and Chet Stachatas each scored 16 for the Hawks (11-9).

Air Force sweeps Colo. St.

The Associated Press

FORT COLLINS, Colo. — Dan Nwaelele scored 18 points and Air Force hit 10 three-pointers to beat Colorado State 59-47 Monday night.

Antoine Hood added 15 points as Air Force (15-8, 6-2 Mountain West Conference) remained two games back of Utah for the conference lead. The Falcons were 10-for-28 on three-pointers in completing the season sweep of Colorado State and winning their third in four games.

Matt Nelson led Colorado State (9-12, 1-7) with 18 points and eight rebounds, his 19th-straight game in double figures. The Rams had 21 turnovers in losing their sixth straight game.

Trailing 22-18 at the break, Air Force hit its first five three-pointers of the second half. A free throw by Stuart Creason and dunk by Michael Morris off a steal got Colorado State as close as 40-36 with 6:11 left.

North Carolina seniors finally finding success

By Aaron Beard
The Associated Press

CHAPEL HILL, N.C. — As a high school senior, Jackie Manuel watched North Carolina earn a No. 1 ranking, finish tied for first in the Atlantic Coast Conference and reach the NCAA tournament.

Standard stuff for anyone wearing a Tar Heels jersey, he figured.

Instead, Manuel, Jawad Williams and Melvin Scott walked in as freshmen to probably the most turbulent time the storied program has known. That included an 8-20 season, missed NCAA tournament bids and an ugly coaching change.

Now, with North Carolina ranked No. 2 heading into Wednesday's game at Duke, the seniors are finally having the kind of success they expected would be an annual occurrence.

"We just sit back and laugh at it and say, 'Man, it's about time,'" Scott said. "This is what it's supposed to be like. We were supposed to enjoy this for years."

"We've been patient and it's our time. If anybody deserves to win, it's us."

After three years of rebuilding, North Carolina (19-2, 8-1 ACC) is now routinely mentioned as a favorite to reach the Final Four.

All but one of its wins have come by double-digit margins, with the Tar Heels beating opponents by an average of 23 points.

The seniors have played key roles, with Williams averaging about 15

points, Manuel starting every game as the team's top defensive player and Scott shooting 39 percent from three-point range off the bench.

But more importantly, they're having fun.

"I definitely think [the success] means the most to them," junior David Noel said. "It's really been a tough road for those three guys, but this year has been a breeze for them. ... I'm happy for them and hopefully we can take them out with a bang."

That would be quite a leap forward from the start of their careers.

First came the eight-win season in 2001-02, the school's first losing record since Dean Smith's first season in 1962. That ended a streak of 27 straight NCAA tournament appearances and a 31-year run of 20-win seasons.

The next year, the three had to adjust their roles when then-coach Matt Doherty brought in the recruiting class of Rashad McCants, Raymond Felton and Sean May. That team finished 19-16 and reached the NIT quarterfinals, but made more headlines when Doherty resigned after the season.

Included in the public spit were reports that players and parents complained to athletic director Dick Baddour about Doherty's intense practices and drastic mood swings.

By the time Roy Williams took over as coach, the three had been through everything from considering whether to transfer to the pain of seeing the

once-proud program struggle on their watch.

"It was crazy, a crazy time," Manuel said.

Doherty said last week that he felt badly that his first recruiting class faced those tough years.

"No young person needs to go through what they went through," he said.

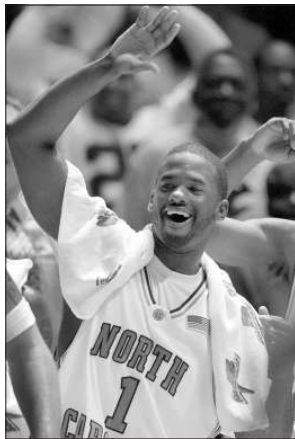
Despite this year's success, the trio is quick to point out that the Tar Heels have plenty left to accomplish. Jawad Williams, Manuel and Scott are 1-6 against the rival Blue Devils, and are winless in three tries at Cameron Indoor Stadium.

They have yet to finish among the top three in the ACC standings, which the Tar Heels did for 37 consecutive seasons before the 8-20 debacle. And then there's the matter of having just one NCAA tournament win at a school with three national titles and a record 15 appearances in the Final Four.

"This season can't be considered a success just yet," Williams said. "We haven't done anything. We've won a few games in the regular season. It won't be a success until we've won a national championship."

Still, this season has been a source of pride for Manuel, who said the seniors have had a big role in bringing the program back to elite status.

"Sometimes I find myself daydreaming and just thinking, 'Wow, I can't believe how we're doing this season,'" he said. "It's just a quick thought, and then it's time to move on."



North Carolina senior Melvin Scott cheers against Georgia Tech Jan. 12. The Tar Heel's seniors are finally enjoying the success they expected when signing with the school.

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Cincinnati 0-for-3 on game-deciding shots

By Joe Kay

The Associated Press

CINCINNATI — They can't get the last shot to go down.

Three times in the last three weeks, the 21st-ranked Cincinnati Bearcats have had a chance to tie or win in the closing seconds.

All three times, they called a timeout, set up a play, came out and missed the shot.

It's fast becoming their epitaph.

The Bearcats (17-5) have become a long shot to win another Conference USA regular-season title because they fade at the end.

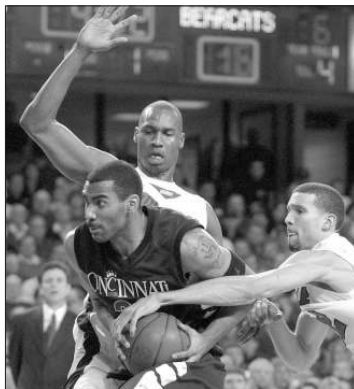
Armein Kirkland missed a 15-foot jumper in the closing seconds of a 91-90 loss at Charlotte on Saturday, dropping Cincinnati into a three-way tie for fourth place.

"I just feel we shouldn't have been in that position in the first place," Kirkland said Monday. "We shouldn't have to be trying to win the game. We should already be in position where we don't have to depend on the last shot."

They seem to wind up in the same place.

The Bearcats blew a 17-point lead against Louisville on Jan. 15, falling behind 69-65. They had a chance to tie it with a three-pointer, but point guard Jihad Muhammad dribbled too long and wound up forcing a long shot that smacked harmlessly off the backboard at the buzzer.

A week later, power forward Jason Maxiell missed a baseline



Cincinnati's Armein Kirkland missed a game-tying shot in the final seconds of a loss to Charlotte on Saturday. It was the third time in three weeks that the No. 21 Bearcats missed a key shot late in the game.

jumper, and Cincinnati was forced to foul in the closing seconds of a 74-70 loss to Wake Forest. The loss at Charlotte left them 0-for-3 on game-deciding shots.

"I don't understand why we haven't been able to be in better

position at the end of the game," Kirkland said. "Hopefully, we can turn that around starting Thursday."

Their annual rivalry game against Xavier (11-8) has turned into much more than a point of pride. The Bearcats can't afford

to dig themselves into the rut they way they did a year ago.

Cincinnati was coming off a three-point loss to Charlotte when it played Xavier last season. The Musketeers were only 10-9 at the time, struggling to find themselves. They fell behind by 11 in the opening minutes on their home court, then rallied for a 71-69 win that ended with another Bearcats miss.

Lionel Chalmers hit a fade-away jumper over Eric Hicks with 27 seconds left, putting Xavier ahead. Cincinnati called a timeout, but couldn't even get off a last shot. Nick Williams' cross-court pass flew over Kirkland's head and landed out of bounds with 4.9 seconds left.

That loss sent the Bearcats into a funk — four losses in six games. They never fully recovered their swagger.

"That was a hard loss," Williams said Monday. "We felt we were the superior team. I think that loss really hurt everybody's confidence as a whole. I think it affected us the rest of the season."

By contrast, Xavier's come-from-behind win got the Musketeers on a roll that didn't end until the final eighth of the NCAA tournament. That one game made all the difference for Xavier.

"Aw, man, did it!" Hicks said Monday. "I'm not trash-talking now, but if we can go ahead and win, maybe we can do like they did last year, get us going."

"We just need to get this bad taste out of our mouths right now."

Bush, MLB players refute Canseco claims

Former baseball star's new book details steroid use

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — President Bush was not aware of any steroid use by Texas Rangers players while he was a team executive, the White House said Monday.

In his upcoming book, Jose Canseco said he introduced Rafael Palmeiro, Ivan Rodriguez and Juan Gonzalez to steroids after being traded to Texas in 1992, the New York Daily News reported. Canseco said Bush, the Rangers' managing partner at the time, must have known about the drug.

White House press secretary Scott McClellan said he spoke to Bush about alleged steroid use.

"If there was, he was not aware of it at



Canseco

"Juiced: Wild Times, Rampant 'Roids, Smash Hits, and How Baseball Got Big," was scheduled for release by Regan Books on Feb. 21. Company spokeswoman Jennifer Sutor told The New York Times that the book's release was moved up a week to Feb. 14.

Sutor also told the newspaper in Tuesday's editions that Canseco's appearance on "60 Minutes," originally scheduled for

Feb. 20, was moved up to Feb. 13.

Canseco, who has refused to publicly discuss the book or what it contains, told The Times he would address the media after the book is released.

"I will give a huge press conference, internationally and worldwide, when the book comes out," he said. "I'll answer any questions then."

Palmeiro, now playing for Baltimore, disputed Canseco's claim.

"I categorically deny any assertion made by Jose Canseco that I used steroids," Palmeiro said in a statement. "At no point in my career have I ever used steroids, let alone any substance banned by Major League Baseball."

"As I have never had a personal relationship with Canseco, any suggestion that he taught me anything about steroid use or otherwise, is ludicrous. We were teammates and that was the extent of our relationship. I am saddened that he felt it necessary to attempt to tarnish my image and that of the game I love."

Gonzalez's agent, Alan Nero, said, "Our immediate reaction is we feel sorry for

Jose, that he felt he had to do this for whatever reason. And we feel badly for everyone he implicated in this."

"Juan has never used steroids and has never been in favor of their use. And, in fact, in 2000, when Major League Baseball did its survey, Juan was in favor of testing and was one of only two players that volunteered to be tested at that time," Nero said.

Rodriguez signed with Detroit last season.

"I'm in shock," Rodriguez told local El Nuevo Dia newspaper for Tuesday's edition. "He is saying things that aren't true, and it hurts me a lot because I would say things like that because I've always had a lot of respect for him, and I've even helped him many times when things weren't going well for him."

Canseco also claims he injected former Oakland teammate Mark McGwire with steroids. McGwire has denied using steroids.

"I have always told the truth and I am saddened I continue to face this line of questioning," McGwire told The Daily News.

Mancuso captures 2nd bronze

BY ERICA BULMAN

The Associated Press

SANTA CATERINA VALPURA, Italy — Sweden's Anna Paerzon proved her hard progress in the speed disciplines hasn't cost her in the technical events when she defended her giant slalom title for her second gold medal of the discipline skiing world championships Tuesday.

Paerzon, who claimed the super-G title last week, hadn't won a giant slalom since the World Cup season-opener last October.

"It is an unbelievably wonderful win for me," said Paerzon, who only added the downhill and super-G to her repertoire last season. "It was really hard today. I fought."

"I wasn't so strong in giant slalom this season. But it shows my decision was right. I'm not going to stop chasing the speed events."

The 23-year-old Swede carved down the sun-drenched Deborah Compagnoni course in a two-run combined time of two minutes, 13.63 seconds.

At the finish, she performed her trademark victory belly flop, sending her legion of blue and yellow-clad fans into hysterics.

It was her third medal in four races since the start of the championships. She also claimed silver in the combined event behind Janica Kostelic.

On Tuesday, Paerzon led after the opening run and entered the second leg with the added advantage that her father and coach, Anders Paerzon, set the course under rules that rotate the job between coaches from race to race.

Paerzon won last season's overall World Cup after dominating the technical races.



Julia Mancuso, of the U.S., speeds down the course on her way to the bronze medal during the Giant Slalom at the World Ski Championships.

She is also the defending slalom and giant slalom World Cup champion. But her performance has dipped since she began focusing more on the super-G and downhill.

She's won only two World Cup races this season, a slalom in Maribor, Slovenia, this month and the season-opening giant slalom in Soelden, Austria.

"Of course, I wanted to win more slaloms and GSs," said Paerzon, who like many skiers here, was suffering from a cough and sore throat. "I knew my results would probably go down in the technical disciplines after I added the super-G and downhill."

"You can't be top in the four disciplines all at once. It will take time."

Finland's Tanja Poutiainen, the World Cup overall and giant slalom leader, finished runnerup in 2:13.82, giving the nation's women their first world championship medal.

"This is my first world championship medal," said the Finn, who is competing in her fifth world. "It's a really great feeling. I can beat Anja in the slalom."

Only seventh after the opening

leg, American Julia Mancuso vaulted into third on her second trip down, finishing in 2:14.27 and adding a second bronze to the one she claimed in last week's super-G.

"I liked the second run course a lot better," Mancuso said. "The set was more my style." Germany's Martina Ertl, 31, climbed from sixth to fourth in 2:14.21 after nailing the upper section of the course on her second trip down.

Austrian Nicole Hosp, second after the opening leg, dropped to fifth after a disappointing second run.

One of the top efforts of the day came from Sarka Zahrobska.

Only 23rd after the opening run, the Czech posted the fastest second run for an aggregate time of 2:15.66 to take the provisional lead then watched as 15 other skiers failed to match her performance.

Zahrobska ended up 10th for her best career giant slalom result.

Kostelic, winner of the combined and downhill titles here, missed the race because of a cough and fever. The 23-year-old Czech still hopes to compete in Friday's slalom, team officials said.

Wade, Ginobili among list of All-Star reserves

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Miami's Dwyane Wade and San Antonio's Manu Ginobili were among six players picked as NBA All-Stars for the first time when reserves were announced Tuesday.

Gilbert Arenas and Antawn Jamison of the Washington Wizards, Amare Stoudemire of the Phoenix Suns, and Rashard Lewis of the Seattle SuperSonics also gained their first All-Star selections in bolting by the NBA's 30 head coaches.

Cleveland's LeBron James, chosen as an Eastern Conference starter last week, is a first-time All-Star, too. The seven first-timers fell short of the record of 10 in 2002 and 1994.

The East's other reserves for the Feb. 20 game in Denver are centers Zydrunas Ilgauskas of Cleveland and Ben Wallace of Detroit, forward Jermaine O'Neal of Indiana, and guard Paul Pierce of Boston.

Guards Steve Nash of Phoenix and Ray Allen of Seattle, and forwards Dirk Nowitzki of Dallas and Shawn Marion of Phoenix were selected for the Western Conference team.

Among those left off the rosters were New Jersey's Jason Kidd, who had played in every All-Star game since 1998, and Orlando's Steve Francis, a three-time All-Star.

A noteworthy absence was Sacramento center Brad Miller, who apparently fell victim to Western Conference coaches filling in Stoudemire as a center. Coaches were required to select two guards, two forwards, one center and two other players regardless of position. They could not vote for their own players.

The Kings also have three other players with 11 combined previous All-Star appearances: Chris Webber, Peja Stojakovic and Mike Bibby — who were left off this year's team.

Sports briefs

The East's starters are Philadelphia's Allen Iverson, Miami's Shaquille O'Neal, New Jersey's Vince Carter, Orlando's Grant Hill and James.

Kobe Bryant of the Lakers, Tracy McGrady and Yao Ming of the Houston, Kevin Garnett of Minnesota and Tim Duncan of San Antonio will start for the West.

Bryant has not played since spraining his right ankle Jan. 13. If he is unable to play in the All-Star game, NBA commissioner David Stern will select his replacement.

Goalie says he was threatened in game-fighting scandal

FRANKFURT, Germany — A German goalkeeper said he was threatened if he went public about attempts to bribe him into throwing a game.

The revelation by Gero Koch of second-division Duisburg on Tuesday is the latest development in a scandal that has shaken German soccer a little more than a year before it hosts the World Cup.

Prosecutors are investigating 25 people, including 14 players and four referees, on suspicion of receiving bribes to rig at least 10 games to help Croatian gamblers collect huge winnings. Three Croatian brothers are in custody.

Koch said he received two calls from an unknown man last Thursday warning "something would happen" if he went public. Koch said he was offered \$25,500 to let in two goals in last season's final round second-division game between Energie Cottbus and Jahn Regensburg.

The goalkeeper said he told the German Soccer Federation about the bribery attempt 10 days ago, once he became aware of the spreading scandal.

The Pats — and America — are not what they used to be

BY BILL REYNOLDS

The Providence Journal

Three mini-columns Super Bowl commercials for the price of one ...

Perspective

To truly appreciate the Patriots, you have to be old enough to remember what they used to be like. Back in the 1960s, when they were used to float around Boston like an unwanted guest looking for a place to play. Back when they were such a distant fourth on the Boston pro sports scene that you almost needed a detective to find them.

To truly appreciate the Patriots you have to remember when they used to play teams like the Denver Broncos that had vertical striped socks, back when there was real NFL on one television channel and the Pats and the AFL on the other. Back when the AFL almost seemed to be on the periphery of American sports, back before Joe Namath and the Jets gave it credibility in 1969.

To truly appreciate these Patriots you have to remember the '70s when the Patriots played in that god-awful old stadium in Foxboro, back afloat by Billy Sullivan, always struggling for both respectability and their place on the New England sports scene. Back when there always seemed to be rumors that they would be off to who knows where, the subtext that the franchise always was fragile, so different from what the NFL was in other parts of the country.

To truly appreciate these past few years you have to have lived through the history, to understand that once upon a time this was unthinkable, as far away as the moon and all the stars. To fully appreciate what this franchise has accomplished you have to understand the past, have to understand the long, strange trip it's been.

Black quarterbacks

Can we finally put this to rest now?
This got real tired a long time ago, one of



Philadelphia's Donovan McNabb is among the elite class of NFL quarterbacks.

those issues that never seems to go away, even though it's no longer applicable. Donovan McNabb. Michael Vick. Steve McNair. Daunte Culpepper. These are four of the top quarterbacks in the game, all African-American, all quarterbacks any team would be fortunate to have. So how could anyone with even the slightest clue think that a black player can't be a quarterback in the NFL?

This is not the 1980s, back when Doug Williams playing in the Super Bowl was a cultural landmark, a visible sign the football world had moved out of the Paleolithic Era. This is not 30 years ago when ugly stereotypes seemed to cling to some faint life as though they were kept alive by a respirator. This is a new millennium where blacks dominate much of football and basketball, where it is no longer uncommon to see a black coach having success. A new millennium where the sport's landscape is so different than it was 30 years ago.



Paul McCartney provided halftime entertainment during the Super Bowl in Jacksonville.

Was anyone surprised Donovan McNabb quarterbacked the Eagles to the Super Bowl? Of course not.

Would anyone have been surprised if he had won? Of course not.

So why is this even an issue anymore?

The super bowl

I can't remember exactly when the Super Bowl became such an orgy of excess, this blending of entertainment and sports that says more about America than it does about football.

But Sunday out-did itself.

Maybe it was the fact the pregame show started on Fox at 10:30 a.m., eight hours before game time. Or that the pregame show was the same cliché group of horrible pop

groups, complete with the frenzied fans who seem ordered up from Central Casting. Maybe it was the fact no group seemed to be left out in the pregame ceremony, to the point that you almost expected a few little puppies and kitty cats to be on the field, too, right there with the little kids and the military flyer and ex-presidents Bush and Clinton, and an ex-Beatle at halftime.

Ah, America here in the new millennium.

Cut through the spectacle and there's just more spectacle.

Somewhere in there was a football game.

Once you got around the TV commercials, of course.

Maybe the Super Bowl needs all this. Maybe when you are charging over two million dollars for a 30-second TV commercial, there's no such thing as too big, no such thing as excess. Maybe that's what we've come to, everything's a show, the more bigger and bloated the better, the sports equivalent of a car chase through an exploding minefield in a movie.

It certainly seems that way, as though it's simply more grist for the entertainment beast. A beast that constantly has to be fed, growing bigger all the time, until it eventually starts to devour the game itself.

If it's true we measure a society by its games, then what is the message of the Super Bowl?

Makes you wonder.



The Black Eyed Peas and Earth, Wind and Fire perform prior to Super Bowl XXXIX.

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Agassi will compete in Davis Cup

The Associated Press

NEW YORK — Andre Agassi is returning to the U.S. Davis Cup team after a five-year absence, persuaded by a 2½-hour chat with captain Patrick McEnroe during dinner at a restaurant in Las Vegas.

Agassi will try to help the United States win the Davis Cup for the first time in a decade, agreeing to play at least in a first-round match against Croatia on March 4-6 at Carson, Calif., the U.S. Tennis Association announced Monday.

The eight-time Grand Slam tournament champion, who turns 35 in April and is a father of two, stopped playing Davis Cup in 2000 as part of a scaled-back schedule geared to peaking for the majors.

He told McEnroe he wasn't sure if he wanted to come back to the team unless he could commit to playing every match. McEnroe flew to Agassi's hometown last week.

"I told him, 'Look, I'm not expecting you to do that, nor are any of the guys on the team. Don't cut off your options by saying it's all



Martina Hingis, ranked No. 1 when she retired in 2002, said tennis has changed. "What was good enough two years ago, doesn't do it anymore. Now, my size puts me at a disadvantage."

or nothing, because we've never had a year where we've had the same four guys for every match," McEnroe said Monday in a conference call. "I just want to convince him that it wasn't a deal-breaker."

Agassi was a member of three

Davis Cup championship teams, going 30-5 in singles.

Andy Roddick, who finished 2003 ranked No. 1 and won the U.S. Open that season, is entrenched as the top U.S. singles player. The second singles slot for Davis Cup has been rotating: Mardy Fish filled that role against Spain. Twin brothers Bob and Mike Bryan are the doubles team.

Hingis staying away from tour

ZÜRICH, Switzerland — Martina Hingis, the former top player on the women's tennis circuit, says she is enjoying life outside the world of professional sport and focusing on her private life.

Hingis, who played her first competitive match since 2002 last week in Pattaya, Thailand, said in an interview published Tuesday with the weekly magazine Schweizer Illustrier that she has no plans to return full-time to the tour, but will continue to play in exhibitions and charity events.

"I have a very good life and enjoyed all the freedom over the last two years," the 24-year-old Swiss said, according to the magazine. "I am no longer 16 or 17, and I am no longer prepared to concentrate solely on world class sport."

Annual rite of winter — a parade in Boston

Patriots feted for 3rd time since '01

BY HOWARD ULMAN

The Associated Press

BOSTON — Three silver Super Bowl trophies and one famous gray sweat shirt worn by the mastermind who won them all took a championship ride through the streets of Boston on Tuesday, passing thousands of screaming fans giddy over their New England Patriots.

On a warm winter day, grown-ups skipped work and kids skipped school to stand on snowbanks and trash cans for a glimpse of coach Bill Belichick, quarterback Tom Brady, Super Bowl MVP Deion Branch and their teammates.

"This is like a reason to skip school, pretty much. I don't really like football," said 16-year-old Anastasia Exarchos of Shrewsbury.

Less than 48 hours after the Patriots won their third Super Bowl in four years, a 24-21 victory over Philadelphia on Sunday, their whirlwind journey ended with a "rolling rally" on World War II-era amphibious duck boats like the ones the Red Sox rode in their championship celebration last fall.

In the lead vehicle, Belichick wore his trademark sweat shirt.

He was surrounded by team owner Robert Kraft, vice chairman Jonathan Kraft and player personnel director Scott Piliu, all clutching the team's three Vince Lombardi trophies.

Players and their families rode in other duck boats, which are usually used to carry tourists around Boston.

"This means more than anything in the world," offensive tackle Matt Light told the screaming fans. "You guys have been the



Members of the New England Patriots ride in World War II-era amphibious duck boats along the parade route in Boston on Tuesday.

greatest fans since Day 1. This is the best season of my life."

Some players flapped their arms, ridiculing the touchdown celebration of Eagles receiver Terrell Owens. Fans threw T-shirts, posters and other memorabilia at them to be photographed.

Defensive end Richard Seymour held his fist for fans to gaze at his Super Bowl ring from another year. Tight end Daniel Graham and fullback Patrick Pass each held up three fingers for each championship, then raised a fourth.

One fan held up a sign "Next Stop Detroit." That's where the next Super Bowl will be held on Feb. 5, 2006.

Several people were led away from the parade route in handcuffs, but police couldn't immediately say why they were detained. Near the end of the celebration, a fight broke out at a downtown in-

tersection and police circled the area while ambulances were called to the scene. It wasn't known whether anyone was injured.

When the rally ended, Brady embraced offensive coordinator Charlie Weis, who is leaving to become head coach at Notre Dame, and raved about the fans' support.

"It's incredible. It seems very surreal, *deja vu*, man," Brady said. "You never get sick of the winning. You never get sick of the fans. I tell you, it's a great place to play."

Fans flocked to the parade route hours ahead of the scheduled start time, using the celebration as an excuse to duck their responsibilities.

"I told my boss I'm locked up in traffic," said Charles Roper, of Brockton, a 46-year-old delivery worker at a dry-cleaning business.

Roper missed the city's two previous Patriots parades, so Tuesday's celebration was his first chance to see the players up close.

"I am very excited," he said. "I'm not leaving until I shake somebody's hand."

Other fans did that Monday when the Patriots arrived at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro after their flight from Jacksonville, Fla. More than 2,000 were on hand to greet them.

Tuesday's celebration stuck to the streets without the detour onto the Charles River that was part of the Red Sox rally. It was frozen over.

Unlike the past two Patriots parades, it also didn't include a rally on City Hall Plaza, which still has enormous piles of snow left over from last month's blizzard.

Associated Press writers Jay Lindsay and Matt Pitta contributed to this report.

No dropoff expected from team of the 00's

BY JAMISON HENSLEY

The Baltimore Sun

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — A day after the coronation of the latest dynasty, the New England Patriots' reign over the NFL doesn't appear like it will end anytime soon.

Winners of three of the past four Super Bowls, including Sunday's 24-21 victory over the Philadelphia Eagles at Alltel Stadium, the Patriots only have one starter (left guard Joe Andruzzi) scheduled to become an unrestricted free agent, meaning their offense and defense has the potential to come back virtually intact.

The largest stumbling block to becoming the first team to capture three consecutive Super Bowls will be turnover on the coaching staff, which has already lost offensive coordinator Charlie Weis and defensive coordinator Romeo Crennel.

Weis will leave to become Notre Dame's head coach by the end of the week, and Crennel was officially announced as Cleveland Browns' head coach on Tuesday.

Without his two most loyal and creative assistants, coach Bill Belichick's mastermind reputation will be tested.

"The coaching staff issue will be a challenge," said Belichick, whose 10-1 postseason record ranks as the best among NFL coaches, surpassing the legendary Vince Lombardi.

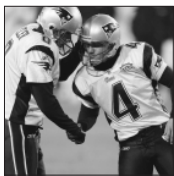
"Romeo and Charlie have done a great job. Their record speaks for itself. With the success that we had, a large share of the credit certainly should go to them. We wish them well and we'll have to adjust."

One of the more touching scenes during New England's celebration was Belichick huddling closely with Weis and Crennel, draping his arms around them in a group hug.

Their coaching has been influential in the Patriots developing into the NFL's elite team despite never leading the league in Pro Bowl selections. Together, Belichick, Weis and Crennel have won 32 of their past 34 games.

"The three of us kind of looked at each other and knew that's the last time we'd be together collectively," Belichick said. "It was just a wonderful moment to be able to share — sort of a perfect ending."

But there doesn't appear any closure for the rest of the Patriots, especially because clutch kicker Adam Vinatieri is the team's most high-profile free agent. Besides Vinatieri and Andruzzi, other key



Kicker Adam Vinatieri (4) and offensive guard Joe Andruzzi are the only Patriots scheduled to become unrestricted free agents during the upcoming offseason.

contributors whose contracts expire are No. 3 receiver David Paten and fullback Patrick Pass.

There is a chance that age might become a factor for New England.

Ten projected starters will be 30 or older, including eight on defense (nose tackle Keith Traylor; linebackers Mike Vrabel, Teddy Bruschi, Willie McGinest, Roman Phifer; cornerbacks Ty Law and Tyrone Poole; and safety Rodney Harrison). Their most versatile player — receiver/cornerback/returner Troy Brown — is considering retirement at the age of 33.

"I'm going to give myself a good three to four weeks. Not right now," Brown said. "I want to enjoy this with my team. I'm going to take some time off. I'm going to chill out with my family and clear my mind. We'll see how it goes from there."

Still, after bringing back less from last season's Super Bowl team — just 15 of 22 starters — the Patriots went 14-2 in the regular season and won their three postseason games by an average of 11.3 points.

"You always want to keep as many of them as you can," Belichick said of his free agents. "We'll be facing decisions. We understand that. We haven't addressed it yet, but we'll address it in due course."

The most pressing issue involves Law, their star cornerback, whose 2005 salary cap hit is a prohibitive \$12.5 million. The general thought is Law will have to be restructured, his contract to avoid becoming a cap cut in March. Belichick indicated that might not be the case.

The emergence of younger cornerbacks could push out Law as well as Poole. When those veteran cornerbacks went down with injuries, rookie Randall Gay and second-year player Asante Samuel more than held their own.

"We'll take a look at all of our options this year," Belichick said.

By edging the Eagles, New England claimed a spot alongside the Green Bay Packers of the 1960s, the Pittsburgh Steelers of the '70s, the San Francisco 49ers of the '80s and the Dallas Cowboys of the '90s.

The Patriots became the team for the decade, a team for the ages.

"This is the best ever," offensive tackle Matt Light said. "We have more heart than anyone in the world. This is unbelievable."



Scott Piliu, the Patriots vice president of player personnel, left, holds the Vince Lombardi Trophy as coach Bill Belichick waves on Tuesday.



New England receiver/cornerback Troy Brown, 33, will consider retiring over the next few months.

Eagles view loss as deferment of title

By DAN GELSTON

The Associated Press

PHILADELPHIA — Philadelphia expects to win a Super Bowl in less time than it took to win the NFC championship.

Playing in their first Super Bowl in 24 years wasn't enough for the Eagles. They want to come back and win it — quickly — after losing 24-21 to the New England Patriots on Sunday.

"We'll get over it," coach Andy Reid said Monday. "We'll get through this thing and we'll come back and learn from it."

Getting back certainly won't be easy — just ask the NFC teams that played in the Super Bowl this decade.

Carolina's repeat bid was sidetracked by a slew of injuries, and it failed to make the playoffs this year. Tampa Bay (2003) was the first team to follow a Super Bowl victory with consecutive losing seasons, and neither St. Louis (2002) nor New York (2001) have returned to the conference championship game.

"I do understand the history of that, and I know it's a tough thing," Reid said. "The reason I think we can get back here is we have a great nucleus of young players who had a taste of this thing."

Maybe that's what separates the Eagles from so many of the other teams. In this salary-cap, free-agency era, Philadelphia (15-4) seems built to last.

They have \$18 million available to spend, and most of their best young players are signed to long-term contracts.

Corey Simon, Jermaine Mayberry, Jeremiah Trotter, Derrick Burgess, Chad Lewis and Jon Ritchie are all unrestricted free agents, but only losing Trotter would be particularly damaging.

"You want to think there will be subtle changes, but you never know how it works out," Reid said.

The Eagles made a big splash in the free-agent market last year, signing Jevon



Eagles QB Donovan McNabb leaves the field amid the Patriots' Super Bowl celebration.

Kearse, Hugh Douglas and Trotter, and trading for Terrell Owens.

Owens led the Eagles with 77 catches for 1,200 yards and 14 TDs, then made a stunning return to play in the Super Bowl just 6½ weeks after ankle surgery. He invigorated the Eagles with his swagger and delivered everything expected, from the electric playmaking to the outrageous antics — including a steamy segment with actress Nicolette Sheridan for the intro to "Monday Night Football."

Reid and team president Joe Banner have a history of drafting quality on draft day, too. The 2002 draft brought starters Lito Sheppard, Michael Lewis, Sheldon Brown and Brian Westbrook, and Super Bowl starting tight end L.J. Smith was a second-round pick in 2003. Guard Shawn Andrews, their 2004 first-round pick, should slide back into the starting lineup after his season ended with a broken leg.

While Andrews suffered his disappoint-

ment in the season opener, the Eagles delivered it to their fans in the last game.

Then again, Philadelphia fans are so painfully used to the routine.

None of Philadelphia's four major professional teams have won a championship since the '60ers captured the NBA title in 1983, and they've won only nine titles in more than 120 years. The last football title came in 1960, and it took three tough losses in the NFC championship game before these Eagles broke through this year.

What made this Super Bowl loss so particularly painful was the puzzling clock management and playcalling in the fourth quarter.

Trailing by 10 points with 5:40 left in the game, the Eagles showed little urgency. They decided to huddle instead of using a hurry-up offense as precious seconds ticked away. Center Hank Pyle yelled at his teammates to hurry back to the line of scrimmage, only to have Donovan McNabb call them back to the huddle.

"We did try to get it going," Reid said of the offense. "I can't tell you the details, the circumstances on why it didn't work as well as it should have."

Of course, it was more than just the final minutes that cost the Eagles their first Super Bowl win. McNabb posted gaudy numbers — his 357 yards passing were the third most in Super Bowl history and he threw three TDs — but he threw two of his three interceptions in the fourth quarter, including one on the Eagles' final drive.

"Donovan was trying to make plays," Reid said. "He was trying to make the plays I was giving him."

Reid and McNabb have been linked since Reid used his first draft pick on the franchise quarterback. The duo have been responsible for the most successful era in team history, and that's a great start. Ultimately, they could be judged on Super Bowl rings, not division titles.

"I know I have a good football team coming back," Reid said. "I'll be ready to go when we get back."

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Romeo Crennel is leaving the Patriots to be the Browns head coach.

Super: Losing coordinators shouldn't stop the Patriots

SUPER, FROM BACK PAGE

"Romeo and Charlie have done a great job. A lot of the success we've had should go to them," coach Bill Belichick said Monday. "I've been with them both a long time. I go back to 1981 with Romeo and I'll miss both of them a lot."

Still, Belichick is a master not only of game-planning but of player procurement. The Patriots have a model for their players: versatile, intelligent, selfless. Belichick and personnel director Scott Pioli find the right guys for their system, and that system produces championships.

"Every time we play, it's a total effort from everyone," said receiver Deion Branch, the Super Bowl MVP with 11 catches for 133 yards. "It's a total organizational effort from the top down."

Unquestionably, Pittsburgh, Indianapolis, San Diego, the Jets and Baltimore all must get better to compete with the New England dynasty. But none of them need to make the quantum leap required of an NFC team to overtake Philly.

So that makes the Eagles the favorite for Super Bowl '06. Not quite. Not as long as Belichick, Brady and the Patriots are still around.

SPORTS



President Bush among those denying steroid claims made in Canseco's book
Page 28

Road to Detroit already mapped

Eagles' path seems smooth compared with Pats'

BY BARRY WILNER
The Associated Press

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — One of the most impressive aspects of the Patriots' third Super Bowl title in four years is the string of teams they beat in the postseason.

New England defeated the Colts and Steelers in the AFC playoffs, then edged the Eagles in the NFL title game. Those four teams were the best in football this season, and all should be formidable again come September.

Several other AFC teams — the Chargers, Jets, Ravens, and possibly the Bills, Chiefs and Jaguars — also could provide a roadblock for the champions next season.

Philadelphia faces a far easier path in the NFC in its bid to get back to the big game. Other than the Eagles, who is a contender to meet the AFC champion in Detroit next February?

Perhaps Atlanta, although the Eagles manhandled the Falcons in the NFC title game and are eons ahead of them in talent, organization and experience.

A healthy Carolina might be a factor, but these Eagles match up better than they did against the Panthers in their January '04 playoff meeting.

Anybody else?

Some team always comes out of nowhere to contend, but to think any NFC club is ready to knock off the Eagles — especially after they finally scaled their biggest hurdle by getting into the Super Bowl — doesn't make much sense right now.

"We'll be back," All-Pro receiver Terrell Owens said. "We have more to do."

And they have been through the Super Bowl crucible.

"I think that the positive you get out of it is that the guys got a taste of it," coach

Andy Reid said, "and I'm sure they will want to come back."

Of course they want to come back, and they probably want another shot at the Patriots.

The Eagles don't have any salary cap woes and most of their free agents are expendable. Donovan McNabb, Brian Westbrook, Jevon Kearse, Lito Sheppard and Michael Lewis are only approaching their primes. Older veterans Owens, Brian Dawkins, Jeremiah Trotter and David Akers are coming off superb seasons.

New England hardly is falling apart, either. While the Patriots don't have as much salary cap space as the Eagles, they aren't hard against the spending ceiling. Their biggest questions are how well they can replace coordinators Romeo Crennel, now Cleveland's head coach, and Charlie Weis, now at Notre Dame.

SEE SUPER ON PAGE 31



Quarterbacks Tom Brady of the Patriots and Donovan McNabb of the Eagles meet after Sunday's Super Bowl. Will they meet again next year at Detroit's Ford Field?

Mancuso storms gate for bronze



American Julia Mancuso passes a gate during the first run of the women's giant slalom in the World Alpine Ski Championships on Tuesday. She used a strong second run to move up from seventh and win the bronze medal. Anja Paerson won gold. See story on Page 28.



Carter, Kidd lift Nets past ailing 76ers

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Strong finish helps Connecticut win at Syracuse

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Like Sox, Patriots' championship journey ends with rolling rally Page 30